

*If It's for My
Daughter, I'd
Even Defeat a
Demon Lord* 8

CHIROLU

Illustrator: Kei



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THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS
WITH GREY EYES THEN
TRANSLATED THE WORDS
OF THE GOLDEN-EYED
KING. HER GENTLE SMILE
CHARMED EVEN THE AGED
COUNT, AND NOT SOLELY
DUE TO HER BEAUTY.

"THE KING
EXPRESSES
HER GRATITUDE
FOR THIS
WELCOME."



THE HAPPIEST BRIDE IN THE WHOLE WORLD WAS SEEN OFF
WITH FLOWERS FULL OF BLESSINGS, WARM WORDS, AND...



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1: Sequel: The Golden King and the Platinum Princess

The sunlight shone down, causing the polished blade to sparkle. The razor-sharp sword had taken countless lives and bathed in a sea of blood, but not even a single smudge tarnished its length. As it sliced through the air, streaks of light trailed in its wake.

It was a truly a deadly weapon, with even a glancing blow from it proving fatal, but it was also terrifyingly beautiful.

The incredibly sharp blade cut unerringly through the very air itself. It arced with all the elegance of a gifted dancer, an impression likely aided by the good looks of the man wielding the brilliant red long sword. His ice blue eyes were fixed straight ahead in a chilling gaze, biting just as keenly as his weapon. Even as he mixed in slight movements of his eyes as feints, the swings of his sword displayed not a hint of hesitation.

That all too dangerous sword dance was entirely directed at a single opponent. And though the blade came from every direction imaginable, that foe dodged every swing without any trouble at all. The man even switched up the tempo on his swings ever so slightly as to throw off his opponent, but he wasn't able to scratch so much as a single hair.

It may not have been a match to the death, but it was far too dangerous to be called just training... and it had spectators.

"Super mad."

"Do you mean 'very angry,' Vint?"

"Yeah."

The spectators, one girl and one beast, shared that rather mundane exchange in quite relaxed tones.

Having offered his brief acknowledgment, the pup then started wagging his

tail and continued, "That's super mad huff."

"Huff?"

"More super mad."

"Hmm... So even angrier than just 'very angry'?"

"Yeah."

They may have been in the familiar backyard of the Dancing Ocelot, but Latina and Vint seemed like they were completely unconcerned with the spectacle unfolding before them. Still, while the aloof pup may be a different matter, it would probably be a bit harsh to scold Latina about that.

"Cut it out already!"

Though he'd been constantly dodging that relentless longsword, Dale still had time to whine, showing that he wasn't exactly being pushed to his limits.

Latina didn't have any real combat experience to begin with, and the swordsmanship unfolding before her was of an insanely high level, so it was completely beyond her comprehension, as if existing in a different world entirely. Plus it was all just so perfectly performed that she couldn't really sense any danger about it, either. And that was only reinforced by the fact that Dale had become an extraordinary demon, raising his physical abilities to such a degree that even such first-rate swordsmanship didn't seem to cause him any significant trouble.

It was then that another calm voice spoke up from behind Latina.

"To think that he would show such anger. Very well, by all means, continue."

"I think that you're probably the reason Sir Gregor is angry, Chrysos. And hearing you say that makes me upset, too."

"Mad?"

"Yes, mad."

Perhaps due to the vocabulary being used, it was hard to detect even a bit of actual anger from that exchange.

The voice from before was that of Chrysos, who had just emerged from the

Ocelot's kitchen in quite a good mood.

In her own attempt to make her feelings clear, Latina fixed a firm gaze on her sister. Before long, though, her attention drifted back towards the spectacle in front of her.

Then, all of a sudden, Latina leapt to her feet and ran into the kitchen, as if she'd remembered something. However, she wasn't gone for long.

With a small metallic *clink*, the sparkling silver blade was returned to its crimson scabbard. Perhaps as an indication of the man's extreme mastery of such combat skills, even sheathing his blade was an act of beauty.

"...It really does feel better, getting a proper workout," said Gregor to his friend, after sheathing his weapon.

"You're certainly looking refreshed..." Dale replied, breathing heavily but looking far from spent.

It was then that Latina came running up to the pair and offered the heavily sweating Gregor a freshly washed hand towel.

"I really am sorry for all the trouble, Sir Gregor," Latina said with a bow of her head, because she knew that her elder sister was the initial cause of all of this.

Then, she held out a glass of cold water on top of a tray for him.

"There's no need for you to apologize. Dale's, well... he's Dale," Gregor said with a strained smile after indulging in Latina's kindness and quenching his thirst by downing the glass in a single go. It was a pretty awful way to talk about his friend, but considering the trouble the man was always causing him, it was entirely reasonable. After all, that was just the way things were.

"I tried to stop her, but well, Chrysos said she wanted to come visit since she was coming this way anyway..."

Latina was talking about the fact that just the other day, a group of envoys from Vassilios had arrived in Kreuz.

Gregor was in charge of protecting the camp that acted as the midpoint between Laband and Vassilios, but the guard for a group of envoys including the ruler of a nation couldn't just be left up to low-ranking soldiers. As such, Gregor

left the camp to the adventurers and some of the soldiers, and took charge of protecting the envoys alongside his own troops.

Since it was on their way to the capital, the envoys were sure to stop in the town of Kreuz after passing through the forest that served as home to a great many magical beasts. So from Laband's point of view, that made it the first place they would be welcoming the group from Vassilios into their nation.

Since Kreuz had a very open policy towards outsiders to begin with, there was a welcoming mood in the air in regards to the visit from the beautiful young ruler of Vassilios and her envoys. It was really no surprise that they would be given such an enthusiastic welcome.

And as that was going on, Dale and Latina went out to see the festivities along with Chrysos.

The regulars of the Dancing Ocelot included both guards charged with maintaining public order in Kreuz, as well as gatekeepers tasked with protecting the city walls.

"Looks like the advance party has arrived, and the envoys from Vassilios will make it here tomorrow. Plus there's the location of the gates. We'll have to ensure their path from the southern gate to the local lord's manor is secure, so we'll be real busy tomorrow."

The captain of the guards let that slip with a grumble, largely because he felt a greater sense of duty towards letting someone who should be at the center of that group know these things than he did towards keeping such things under wraps. The girl in question, though, just nodded with a brief, "Yeah," while spinning around a water jug she seemed to have taken a liking to.

The jug Chrysos was holding was full of water and fragments of vegetables that still retained their roots. It was questionable if they would ever reach a point of being edible, but it was still plenty enough to stimulate her curiosity, and she seemed to be quite fond of observing the roots steadily growing out as of late.

Meanwhile, Latina, who was seated next to her sister, tilted her head a bit.

"It's true that the southern gate is closest to the forest, but still... They

decided to enter from that direction, even though it's a bit of a rough area?"

"It just doesn't seem plausible to have them circle around to the east or north. There was an alternative plan to send them through the residences in the western district, but now that their arrival is the talk of the town, we can't simply ignore all the folks saying that they want to see the envoys."

"I see... The people of Kreuz sure do love their festivities, and everyone seems to really be looking forward to it..."

"In that case, how about limiting traffic on the street in front of the place for today? It'll have a big impact on the amount of customers we have coming and going, though..." Kenneth muttered, then shot his overly serious employee, that adorable waitress, a gentle smile. "That would mean the shop would be open but effectively not conducting business, right? Well, there's no need to worry about the folks who are always hanging around, so it shouldn't be a problem if you go out to see."

"Wah...!"

Latina brought both of her hands up to her cheeks, seemingly shocked to find that her inner desire to go out and see the sights had leaked out. She even went a little red with embarrassment.

Kenneth's words prompted an apologetic look from Latina, but Chrysos was clearly full of enthusiasm. Her big golden eyes went wide, and she looked to be thinking about something.

"Hmm... Perhaps it would be better to have my countrymen come to this place rather than going out to see them."

"But Chrysos, there are going to be a whole lot of people, so that would be dangerous..."

"A demon lord cannot be harmed by anyone but a hero, so there should be no issue."

"That's not what I meant..."

"Latina, even if we didn't go, I'm sure Chrysos would head out on her own. You've got to keep an eye on her to make sure she doesn't wander off and get

lost in the crowd,” Dale chimed in, making a face that clearly showed he had already given up. But it was better for his mental health this way, rather than risking something happening where he couldn’t see.

In addition, Dale claimed that he wouldn’t lose sight of Latina, no matter how crowded it got. It was hard to tell if that was a power granted to him by the name engraved on his left hand as her retainer, or simply a matter of his own unique skills.

“Well then...”

Latina was a very curious girl by nature, so there was no way that she wasn’t interested seeing the town in this sort of festival mood.

“Plus, we’ll have to give Adelina’s group a break during that time, right?” Dale said, looking over at a group of three girls completely collapsed on a table. The girls had been run ragged watching over a free-spirited demon lord, possessed of both nimble footwork and an utter unpredictability when she wasn’t at either the Ocelot or the manor. It was difficult to imagine the results of releasing her into such a large crowd of people. But though it was hard to say just what Chrysos would do, the toll watching over her had taken on Adelina’s group was readily apparent.

Latina certainly seemed to be in agreement, giving Dale a troubled smile as a response.

“Me too, Sis!”

“I’d really prefer not to pile on even more baggage for me to look after...”

“As his parent, I won’t ask you to go through all that trouble. Don’t worry about Theo.”

“I don’t want Dale. I want to be together with Sis!” the young son of the store’s owners bluntly stated, but unfortunately neither his father nor Dale paid him any heed.

Then, two days later, just as they had been informed, the envoys from Vassilios safely arrived in Kreuz.

A group of Labandese soldiers led the procession down the street after

passing through the southern gate. And the throngs of people were neatly parted to either side of the road. The path from the southern gate to the lord's manor in the central district was under strict watch by a great many guards and specially assigned adventurers, to such a degree that not even a stray kitten would go unnoticed.

The flag held by the soldiers leading the way displayed the coat of arms of the great noble Eldstedt clan. Behind them was the only member of the party on horseback, a young black haired swordsman. Catching a glimpse of the youth tasked with both leading and protecting the procession was also something that had drawn the crowd. After all, he was a champion who stood alongside the Platinum Hero, and was next in line to become duke.

As he sat atop his splendid black war horse with his chilly gaze fixed forward, the swordsman really did have the air of a champion about him. Still, there were some women amongst the crowd who couldn't help but sigh upon seeing him, perhaps because they saw that the tales of his beauty in the epics sung by the bards were no exaggeration.

He was followed by the group of devil envoys, with their wonderful horns of all shapes and hues on clear display. The loose clothing they wore was of a sort not seen in the nation of Laband. The decorations dangling from their horns and their necklaces made from a dazzling rainbow of gems and beads were a novel beauty to the people of Kreuz. As the two nations had no contact up until now despite being neighbors, the sight of these envoys from Vassilios was one of great curiosity for the townsfolk. The particularly quick-witted merchants from amongst the crowd were already planning out arrangements to start selling Vassilios-style accessories in the back of their minds. After all, if this friendly mood between the two countries continued to rise, such things were sure to become popular.

When they saw the elaborately crafted vehicle the devils were surrounding, excitement rushed through the crowd like a wave. After all, it was no mere carriage.

It was being pulled along not by horses, but by a scaled reptilian magical beast of a sort not seen in Laband. Its scales sparkled in the sunlight, changing color based on how the light struck them. And it seemed to have no problem at all

dragging along the vehicles affixed to it. It may have been traveling at a leisurely pace, but you could sense its strength simply from the way it moved.

The magical beast alone would have been enough to draw the eye, but the vehicle itself was truly splendid, too. It gave the impression of a massive jewel case, with minute decorations adorning the chassis alongside the countless gemstones.

It was clearly a vehicle meant for nobility, having the air of a work of art about it.

One person sighed at the sight of the elaborate decorations, while another's thoughts ran wild at the thought of the young, beautiful ruler riding inside.

"Well, they are using it to carry their luggage," Chrysos threw out there without even a hint of hesitation.

"At least have your double ride in it!"

Normally, Chrysos should have been the one at the very core of this procession. And yet here she was amongst the crowd, standing next to her sister and holding fruit juice and a skewer she had bought from a stall.

"Ah, this skewer is delicious. It was seasoned with just the right amount of salt. And just what spices did they use, exactly...?"

For the time being, let's put aside the fact that her sister was acting rather unconcerned, too.

"It would be possible to secure some degree of food locally, but transporting the supplies was crucial. It was a rational decision to make."

It was hard to deny that, hearing it put so bluntly.

It was certainly pretty to look at, but that magical beast and carriage seemed pretty sturdy. Even ignoring its ability to transport a VIP, it must have also been capable of traveling along the still-undeveloped roads through the forest. Plus Chrysos, the one who was supposed to be riding in it, was already here, and if it would otherwise be empty, this was a more sensible thing to do.

Normally, it would be standard for the leader of a nation to have at least one vehicle of their own serving as a symbol of their authority. But in Vassilios it was

different, as there was no need to ostentatiously flaunt one's right to rule. The leader of the nation was the demon lord, who was selected by the gods. As the country of devils, Vassilios abided by the gods and the nation was also ruled from the shrine, making it a sort of religious state.

For that reason, the First Demon Lord's authority was absolute, so there was no need for them to display it more than was absolutely necessary. That was why Chrysos didn't think anything of riding in a mere wagon despite possessing such an extravagant vehicle.

After thinking things through from that angle, Dale too was satisfied.

"Well, first impressions are important. Based on advice from Rose and Sylvia, I had a vehicle that might be popular over here repaired. Though the reaction is even greater than I had expected."

"I feel like you don't see things that flashy in Vassilios very often though, right...?" Latina asked, tilting her head.

"That is certainly true," Chrysos immediately agreed. By nature, the people of Vassilios weren't fond of elaborate furnishings or gaudy baubles.

"It was a hobby of the previous demon lord... Or I should say, of his favorite mistress. He had many such things built in order to attract her attention. Though it was damaged, it had been preserved in the recesses of the shrine, since it could someday serve some use. Well, it seems to have served as a perfect example of a 'local specialty' of my nation."

Vassilios had a harsh climate and was unsuited for farming, but it was blessed with abundant resources beneath the earth. The vehicle was really doing a good job of advertising that fact through the gems adorning it, as well as the decorative skills possessed by the nation.

"Did you prepare any gifts to present to Laband or anything...?"

"This visit is ultimately just the preliminary stages of negotiations. Once we have officially established diplomacy between our nations, I shall prepare such things," Chrysos responded to Dale. "Well, I shall prepare at least the minimum, at least, if such a thing is only natural."

"Well it's not like you're becoming a vassal state or something, so I guess it's

pretty tricky to figure out how far to go with it, huh?”

“The differences in values between our two nations also makes deciding such matters quite complicated.”

“Yeah, I can see that.”

Dale and Chrysos chatted away in the middle of the crowd over a topic that would be hard to call mere idle gossip. It was then that Latina butted in, her voice trembling.

“Dale... I think I just locked eyes with Sir Gregor. Was I just imagining it, maybe...?”

“Hmm?” Dale then shot Latina a dry smile and shook his head. “Nope, you weren’t imagining it. He totally noticed. See, he’s a little shaken right now, right?”

“I can’t tell.”

“Nor can I.”

Since he had known Gregor for so long, Dale was the only one that could tell, as his friend didn’t exactly wear his emotions on his sleeve.

At any rate, the splendid parade solemnly advanced along towards the center of town. Once the envoys were out of view the crowd started dispersing on its own, its constituents excitedly chatting away. There didn’t seem to be anything dangerous to the air about the scene at all. And looking at the state of things, there were sure to be all sorts of fresh rumors about the envoys floating around town.

As such thoughts ran through his head, Dale hastened Latina and Chrysos back to the Ocelot. They took a minor detour to the skewer stand once more, though, to indulge Latina’s curiosity.

Not long after that, Gregor snuck his way into the Dancing Ocelot. Then, he drew his blade, wanting to land at least one blow on Dale to start with.

“I’d expect not, but do you have any idea of the state in which I was left, realizing the person I was supposed to be guarding was already at our destination?”

“I told you, don’t blame me.”

“Well I certainly can’t blame the person in question, here. Besides, it was hardly a punishment, having you accompany me in such light exercise.”

“Hahaha. Normally you wouldn’t call someone with your level of skill coming at you with a drawn blade ‘light exercise,’ would you?”

“If you know my level of skill, then you should also know that I wouldn’t land a fatal blow if it wasn’t necessary.”

“That doesn’t exactly bring me peace of mind...”

As he chatted along with Dale, Gregor vaguely sensed the source of the discomfort he had sensed since the battle with the Demon Lords of Calamity: Even after the man had dodged his onslaught of slashes, Dale wasn’t showing any real signs of exhaustion. He decided that apparently his friend had passed beyond being classified as a mere “person” by this point.

The First Demon Lord has become his sister-in-law, but he shouldn’t have met her until after he went to Vassilios...

Gregor was well aware that one could easily surpass the abilities of a normal person by becoming a demon lord’s retainer. But since a hero was a demon lord’s antithesis, Gregor wasn’t sure if one becoming a demon was even possible to begin with. Still, to the First Demon Lord, Dale was her sister’s partner. He couldn’t rule out the possibility that she would want him as her own retainer.

Well, he wasn’t fully satisfied with the matter, but he also couldn’t force a hypothesis as to what had happened at the moment. Plus, considering his friend’s personality, he was sure he would hear about it, one way or another, eventually. That’s why he didn’t feel the need to grill him right now.

As he thought to himself, Gregor tossed out a bit of a half-joke.

“Well, I really would like have a proper life-or-death battle with you someday, you know...”

“And I sure wouldn’t,” Dale immediately replied, shooting him down.

The fact that he sounded disinterested rather than angry actually told Dale

how serious Gregor was, which was rather frightening. As a pure swordsman, Gregor aimed for ever greater heights and polished his skills. Or to put it bluntly, he was honestly a bit of a battle maniac. But Dale knew that overtook his calm rational side, so he breathed a sigh rather than giving any sort of overblown reaction.

“You’re the type who doesn’t show his true strength in training or mock battles, aren’t you?”

“Really...?” Latina said, reacting to Gregor’s statement. She was tilting her head because ever since she was little, she had seen Dale continue to diligently polish his skills, never neglecting his training. And so, she didn’t think she had those sorts of ups and downs to him.

“Dale is the sort of man who can’t display his true strength without a firm goal to work towards,” Gregor bluntly stated, not bothering to mince words. Dale grimaced disapprovingly at his friend’s comment, but he must have known it was true, as he didn’t offer a rebuttal.

The reason for Dale’s ups and downs were because he was deeply dedicated to the idea of protecting others. Since there was certainly no chance of losing something he held dearly at the moment, his true strength was nowhere to be seen. Dale didn’t see any value in the fame that could be gained from victory, nor was he concerned about his pride being hurt by a loss.

And it was no surprise that Latina wasn’t aware of that other side of Dale. After all, she was the symbol of all that he wanted to protect. Whenever he was standing before her, he was always full of motivation. His pride drove him to never want to fail in front of her, ever since back when he was just her guardian.

“But still...” Gregor started, looking like he was a bit at a loss for words as he wiped his sweat. His eyes were fixed on the girl with the golden eyes standing nearby.

Meanwhile, Chrysos looked back at Gregor, who she had seen leading the procession when she went to see the envoys. As she had been informed about the Eldstedt clan, the most powerful noble family in all of Laband, she was well aware of the sort of position this man held.

“No matter where I may be, I am simply Latina’s elder sister, Rhyso,” Chrysos suddenly declared.

“Huh?” Latina questioned, tilting her head.

“How blunt.”

Dale and Gregor shared strained smiles.

“Depending on your intentions, you might wish to pray to the gods.”

“Indeed,” Gregor briefly responded, understanding what Chrysos was saying. He didn’t kneel to her or anything of the sort.

He observed the two sisters while taking care not to be rude, and then gave a sigh of admiration.

“Just as the rumors stated, you two really do look quite similar.”

“Their personalities are totally different, though... Well, not totally, actually. There are some similarities, I guess.”

If Dale had to point something out, it would be they were both seriously aloof girls who had been raised in ignorance of the outside world.

“I wish you would consider how it made me feel, when I went to greet the Golden King’s procession at the relay point...” Gregor grumbled, a rarity for him to do so openly.

Dale ruffled his own hair and responded in a bit of a troubled tone, “I’m telling you, there’s no use telling *me* that...”

“None should exist who know of my face, though.”

“Couldn’t you at least try to hide just a little bit?”

Despite the fact that he had just denied his involvement, Dale couldn’t hide his astonishment at that statement from Chrysos. Meanwhile, Gregor was looking like he had started considering the far-off future instead.

“First off, the adventurers there noticed the king was missing. I had broken out in a cold sweat, worried I might soon be facing a mob.”

Nobody said a word.

“I hadn’t realized at first myself, but still... The soldiers were left wondering why the adventurers looked like they were about to start running wild. Really, I was left racking my brains trying to figure out how to get the situation under control.”

Everyone remained silent, still.

He had felt like he could hear the intense, bloodcurdling shouts of the regulars of the Ocelot, which served as a sort of relay point between Vassilios and Laband.

It was certainly true that none of the adventurers had ever seen the Golden King. However, they were all plenty familiar with her identical twin sister.

The soldiers had no idea what was happening when a lament of, “We were seriously looking forward to at least getting a glance...!” was raised by the adventurers, as Gregor was the only one of them who was acquainted with Latina and knew her background.

“So it was that dangerous of a place, was it? Perhaps my decision happened to be quite fortuitous after all, then...”

When the very cause of all this boasted so openly, Dale couldn’t help bowing his head to his friend.

“If it’ll serve your needs, then I’ll be your sword-fighting opponent whenever you wish.”

The root of the problem here had been his sister-in-law, after all.

“Anyway, Chrysos...” Dale started, getting his thoughts back in order.

“What is it?”

“The envoys have arrived.”

“Yes, I went along with you to go see them, did I not? Are you going senile already?”

“You said you were going to join up with them here in Kreuz, didn’t you?”

“Gah.”

“And since they’re going on to talk with the leaders of Laband, you can’t

exactly leave that up to a double, right? Before things are exposed, you should return to your role as the Golden King—”

“ * * * * 、 * * * * * * * * * ”

“Hmm...?” Dale questioned, tilting his head in response to Chrysos’s rapid words that he failed to pick up on. Meanwhile, Latina had a troubled look on her face.

“Chrysos, even if you say that...”

“ * * * 、 * * * ”

As Chrysos gave that reply, she hid behind Latina. Then, she stayed like that, not saying a word.

Dale was left dumbfounded for a moment, but then he thoroughly wrinkled his brows as he realized the meaning behind Chrysos’s actions.



“Hey,” Dale stated in a low, displeased sounding voice, but Chrysos showed no signs of coming out from behind her sister. And Latina was looking seriously troubled, trapped between the pair.

“You’re not a kid, so stop being so unreasonable.”

“ * * 、 * * * * * * * * * * ”

“And stop pretending you don’t understand our language whenever it’s convenient for you.”

Despite Dale’s firm tone, Chrysos didn’t budge. Then she childishly puffed up and turned away, an action without a hint of the dignity you’d expect from someone known as the Golden King.

“Chrysos...” Latina said, turning around to face her sister, who was now throwing a serious hissy fit. Chrysos went ahead and spoke up first though, as if trying to seize the initiative.

“Platina, do you not find it difficult to be separated from me?”

“That’s not the case at all...”

Having been asked that, there was no way that the good-natured girl could take a firm stance against her sister. She really didn’t want to part ways, either. Her twin was pretty much her other half, more precious to her than almost anyone, and she didn’t want to lie about those feelings.

“I will not ask that you accompany me all the way to Vassilios. I realize that it is still too soon for you, Platina.”

“Yes... I’m sorry, Chrysos. I still just can’t...”

“I shall strive my hardest to get rid of those dregs causing problems known as the elders, so that I may welcome you back as soon as possible. I shall drive all those who call you a sinner not just from the temple, but from the entire town.”

“Isn’t it bad to be basing stuff like that on your own personal feelings...?” Latina asked, breaking out in a cold sweat. She didn’t know the state of things in the shrine, but she prayed that her sister wasn’t on the verge of beginning a reign of terror.

Meanwhile, Dale had no clue about the specifics of the situation either, but he thought it would be only natural for Chrysos to make good on her words. After all, anyone who acted cruelly towards his adorable little Latina deserved to be put to death.

Well, if Latina had never been exiled as a sinner, I never would have met her, so I've got mixed feelings on the matter... Dale thought to himself.

He would never truly let his dedication waver, though.

Ignorant of what Dale was currently thinking, Chrysos continued her discussion with Latina.

"Would it not be acceptable if we at least stayed together while I was in Laband? I have waited for so very long, wondering when I would be able to see you again."

"Rhyso..." Latina said, her eyes growing cloudy as she called her sister by her childhood nickname. "I feel the same way... But there's work that only you can do as the king of Vassilios, right? And so..."

"That is true..."

Chrysos gripped Latina's hand tight, all the while bearing the feelings welling up inside of her. Her gaze that had once fallen lifted back up. Latina looked straight at her sister, who seemed to now understand her position.

"In that case, you shall accompany me, Platina."

"Wah?" Latina gasped in surprise.

"I was told that you were coming to the capital with Dale, right? Then you'd just be moving your schedule up a bit, correct?" Gregor chimed in.

"Huh? I haven't heard anything about that. What's going on?" Latina questioned, clearly bewildered. This all a bolt out of the blue for her.

"Ah, I forgot..." Dale muttered while breaking out in a cold sweat.

He had completely forgotten to tell Latina about the duke's "request." It had been given to him at the same time he learned of the Vassilios envoys arriving, but the shock of Chrysos' sudden appearance, among other things, had wiped it from his mind.

“Platina, you do not wish it to be known that you live here in this city, yes? Then simply stay by my side as my younger sister, the princess.”

“Huh? But you’re going to meet with some really important people, right...?”

“Well of course they wouldn’t have petty officials meet with a foreign ruler,” Dale chimed in.

“Of course my father will be one, and His Majesty is scheduled for a meeting as well,” Gregor added.

With that, Latina flew into an even more obvious panic. After all, in her own mind, she was essentially a commoner.

“If it came down to it, could you simply not act as if you did not understand the language?” Chrysos suggested.

“I’ve met Sir Gregor’s father before, though...” Latina replied, pointing out a key issue with the rather crude plan.

“I have also prepared fake horns, so that you may blend in with those of us from Vassilios, Platina.”

“Chrysos, does that mean... You intended to get me mixed up in all this from the very start?”

“Devil eyes could tell they were fakes, but they used the shape of my own horns as a model, so the results were quite good.”

“Chrysos, you can’t just change the subject like that to cover things up...”

“Actually, I think that she may not even be trying to do that...” Dale said with an astounded look on his face, but he didn’t even try to rein in Chrysos. Realizing what he was thinking, Latina turned towards Dale with a bit of a sad look on her face.

“Dale...”

“No, you see, I got that order, and then I gave my consent, so... I’m seriously sorry that I forgot to tell you.”

Considering Dale’s position, it would have been very difficult to turn down a request from his employer, the man who held the greatest power in all of

Laband. He may have been an extraordinary hero and a demon who blazed his own trail forward, but he still needed to at least exercise discretion in official matters.

Without saying a word, Latina turned her gaze from Dale to Gregor. From what he had said before, he was in agreement with Chrysos. That meant that nobody here was on her side, which made her sweat even harder.

By the way, Vint had already grown bored of this exchange and left to go play. Though even if he hadn't, it was unlikely that he would have added much leverage to her position.

The conclusion the now-panicked Latina reached was that she needed time to compose herself, which she wouldn't get by staying here. And so, she quickly made an about-face and fled straight into the kitchen. Without even a moment's hesitation, she continued on through the Ocelot's storefront.

"Ah, she ran for it," Dale casually muttered.

By his side, Chrysos's eyes showed a twisted glint of humor. Though the two were identical twins, such an expression would never be seen on Latina.

"Do not allow Platina to escape!"

Dale realized who that shout was directed towards when he saw the state of things inside the shop. The regulars were all barring the exit, leaving Latina standing there dumbfounded.

"Why...?" Latina asked in a trembling voice, because the regulars of this shop were only second to Dale in terms of always being on her side.

"Sorry, little lady... It got decided by committee," Sylvester replied to the now ghastly pale Latina while making a face like he was swallowing a bug. That expression was only natural considering how many years the regulars had been soft on their favorite adorable waitress. But even so, he gave no sign of budging.

Nobody present needed to ask what sort of committee he meant.

"How naive, Platina. Grasping control of the hearts of others is a simple matter for a king. Or did you think I was doing nothing at all as I visited this

place?”

After casting a sideways glance at Chrysos as she bragged about her victory, Dale bluntly asked Sylvester, “How did she buy you off?”

“She... she asked if we wanted to see the little lady dressed like a Vassilios noble...”

“Platina will not wear Vassilios formal wear on her own. The people of this shop are quite soft on Platina, so she proved an excellent bargaining piece,” Chrysos stated, brimming with confidence.

“I can’t deny that,” Dale agreed after thinking on it for a bit.

“You can’t, huh?” Gregor chimed in with a sigh, resignation in his voice. “Now that I think of it, the news that the ruler of Vassilios had a beautiful twin sister caught the attention of the portrait painter who frequents my family home...”

“If it involves not just myself but Platina as well, it will surely serve to foster the friendly mood between our two nations. After all, she is the Platinum Hero’s Fairy Princess.”

“Shall I have a copy sent here once the portrait is finished...?” Gregor muttered, only for the regulars to go wild before even Dale.

Considering the circumstances, Latina was already on the verge of tears. It was a sight that really ignited a desire to protect her, but Chrysos had seized control of the moment, so sadly no one there would lend a hand to save her.

“Ah. Should I proceed with ending the bodyguard contract for those three?” Rita pondered with her usual expression on her face, completely unbothered by the commotion.

After that exchange, even a naturally bright and energetic girl like Latina was left sulking in the corner of the Ocelot. And seeing their adorable waitress in such a bad mood, the regulars couldn’t help but feel guilty, and ended up silently keeping their distance.

Dale, meanwhile, had retreated to the depths of the kitchen upon seeing those big, teary grey eyes silently staring at him, perhaps due to pangs of guilt. Well, no, since it was Dale, he may also have been at risk of passing out at how

adorable her sulking was, or at losing his self-restraint in the face of her glaring. After all, his usual response to such situations was to absolutely smother her in affection, which he couldn't exactly do in front of other people. And perhaps due to the chilly reception Chrysos and Gregor had shown him, even he felt the need to restrain himself for the time being.

Meanwhile, the demon lord with the unparalleled sister complex was deep in thought, wondering if there was any way to bring the water culture jar she had carefully tended back with her. As such, she didn't have any time to pay attention to her sulking sister.

All that was in the container she was holding were some mere chunks of ordinary vegetables that had started budding. But even so, she had grown rather attached after observing them day after day. It really did make for a strange sight, seeing the ruler of a nation treat some vegetable scraps like a precious treasure.

"How about bringing back a bulb?" Rita asked, noticing the state Chrysos was in.

"Hmm?"

Rita grabbed hold of a nearby paper and pen and started sketching out a visual aid as she explained her proposal.

"You can raise a bulb by immersing just the ends of the roots in water like this. Apparently you need to keep it nice and cool until it starts budding, though... It might be tricky due to the warm climate of Vassilios, but I think you may be able to manage by employing magic."

"Indeed."

"If you put it in a glass or some other sort of clear container, that would be perfect for observation, and you may even be able to count it as an example of Labandese handicrafts when you take it back."

"Yes..."

Chrysos was now fully enraptured. She was incredibly curious by nature to start with, after all. It was actually something that both sisters shared, the way that whenever something new caught their interest, they would devote their

full attention to it.

“How terribly intriguing, to see plants grow so vibrantly with water alone...” However, her interest in aquaculture was out of more than curiosity. “If we continue with this research, it may be an agricultural boon even in a barren nation such as Vassilios,” she said, clearly speaking as the leader of a nation. “No matter how skilled we devils may be at magic, it simply would not be possible to entirely quench the thirst of our parched land. But if it was just in a limited area, it would be possible to keep a clear stream flowing. The issue is what plants would take root... I suppose it will also be necessary to verify if plants without bulbs can also be grown in just water...”

The way her thoughts raced like that was just like her twin sister, too. And so, Rita gave an awkward smile and continued on.

“Apparently the divine protection from Quirmizi often won’t activate if they’re not in contact with the earth, so that cultivation method isn’t typically used in Laband, but... There are eccentrics anywhere and everywhere, so I’m sure there are some scholars out there who have done some research into the matter. After all, that’s how knowledge of this bulb gardening method spread to begin with.”

Rita and Chrysos were both absorbed in their conversation, so neither of them noticed when Gregor silently came up beside Latina, who had been left all on her own.

Latina looked up, noticing his presence. While he was Dale’s friend and someone she was acquainted with, he wasn’t someone she was especially close to, so she tried to put on her best face.

“I believe it would be rather convenient for you to accompany your sister,” he said, throwing out a statement she couldn’t ignore, without any lead up. Latina was very upfront about things at her core, so her attention openly turned entirely towards Gregor.

“Huh?”

“You and Dale have become engaged, but that isn’t known to the world at large, right?”

“That’s... Yes.”

It was common knowledge amongst her friends and the regulars. And besides, Dale and Latina were so obviously clingy that it would make plenty of sense to call their engagement obvious in general.

But since the “world at large” Gregor mentioned included high society amongst a great many others, it would be best to say that it wasn’t known.

Dale was extremely famous as the Platinum Hero, but all that was known at large about his private life was that he had a lover known as the Fairy Princess. Too much of it remained a mystery to the public, so the image presented by the bards and general populace was steadily growing.

On the other hand, the fact that his actual deeds sounded like they were from the realm of pure fiction themselves only further confused things.

“So I’m saying, in high society there are a fair number of nobles who are after Dale.”

“Huh?”

“I don’t mean that in a bad way... Well, I suppose I can’t quite say that, but quite a few have set their eyes on him as a result of his abundant wealth, religious influence, connection to Tislow, and of course his fame as the Platinum Hero. I don’t believe I need to explain that it’s common practice for such folks to use any means necessary to try to win him over.”

From Gregor’s matter-of-fact tone, he didn’t seem to be including any strong personal feelings in the matter. And so, he just seemed a lot more persuasive, talking about things objectively rather than arguing a position.

When Gregor first mentioned people aiming for Dale, Latina’s face went pale, but as she began to understand his point, she started to go beet red instead.

“And it’s not just lower-ranking nobles, but higher ranking ones as well... Well, there’s certainly a trend amongst those who have nothing but a family name behind them, but still, there are also those who are greatly valuing Dale’s personal abilities and thus planning proposals.”

“Dale is engaged to me... He wouldn’t accept those proposals,” she said in a

surprisingly sharp tone, a bit of a stern look on her face.

To start with, Dale had far more jealousy and a desire to monopolize his partner than most. That hadn't changed since she was little. It just made sense that she came to rely on him with all his strength when she was just a child who had lost everything she had, but Dale had answered those feelings, leaving a strong impression on her.

His doting on her usually far exceeded her dependence on him, so she just couldn't imagine him causing such trouble.

But to her, the thought of Dale being surrounded by noble ladies without her around certainly wasn't a pleasant one.

"Naturally, Dale isn't paying them any heed," Gregor continued on, declaring his friend's innocence.

He had predicted Latina's reaction, but seeing her so earnestly show how she was feeling, he couldn't help but feel sorry for her. But still, as a member of the powerful ducal family and an elite of Laband trying to push forwards friendly relations between the two nations, he saw great value in dragging the Fairy Princess to the negotiating table. He was confident that it was best to use his friend to peacefully bring that about, but her reaction was just too much for him.

Naturally, Gregor was well aware that Dale was paying no heed to the various nobles who were after him. Dale already had a younger fiancée he was deeply in love with, so any attempts to pair him with another woman, even through an official marriage request, would only be rewarded with anger.

However, facts were still facts.

"Folks like that won't give up so easily, even if they learn that Dale has a fiancée. And I certainly can't say there aren't haughty, arrogant nobles out there who would think that a marriage to a commoner could be easily annulled."

Latina's cheeks puffed up, the same pouting she had done since she was a child. For someone who had survived high society and politics as a member of the ducal family, manipulating her was as easy as taking candy from a baby.

“I don’t think even such unreasonable nobles would dare to raise a hand against the younger sister of Vassilios’s ruler, though.”

As a result, the sulking girl, her thinking a commoner’s through and through, nodded her own head in agreement.

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As the local lord who ruled Kreuz, Count Kleinmifel ended up being the first noble of Laband to welcome the group of envoys from Vassilios, the neighboring nation they had no exchange with up until now.

The government facilities in Kreuz were all located in the town’s center, starting with the lord’s manor. And so, that was where the envoys had headed after passing through the southern gate. The Golden King who had arrived in a vehicle so splendid it could be called a work of art, was wearing a dark gauze veil. Even the count wasn’t able to lay eyes on her rumored beautiful countenance.

The ruler of Vassilios, the First Demon Lord, also ran the temple of Banafsaj, the most revered god in that nation.

Humans didn’t have much faith in Banafsaj, and hardly any knew of the god’s rituals. And they didn’t even know of the nation’s customs to start with, so when they were told that the nation’s ruler was a religious symbol and didn’t let herself be seen outside the temple, they just had to accept it.

Apparently that was only when dealing with an indeterminately large number of people though, and didn’t apply for conferences or welcome banquets.

The one tasked with guiding the envoys was the third son of the prime minister, Duke Eldstedt, and was in his own right a famed champion and swordsman. Based on his proposal, two extra seats were prepared for the welcome banquet.

There wasn’t a person alive unfamiliar with his sworn friend, the Platinum Hero. And he was the one who was tasked with guiding the ruler of Vassilios.

And when one heard that the Platinum Hero would be accompanied by a famed beauty, the Fairy Princess naturally came to mind.

When the count saw the Golden King and the Fairy Princess together at the banquet, he forgot to even breathe for a moment. Aside from the color of their eyes they were utterly identical, so there was no need to explain their relationship.

Both the young ruler and her sister had similarly shaped sleek black horns, and they wore dangling from them similar gold and silver decorations with plenty of jewels all delicately crafted in a foreign style. And their clothing was in an entirely different style than that of Laband, but from the finely crafted sashes and smooth, brilliant material, it was clear that they were outfits fitting for such noble personages.

“ * * * 、 * * * * * * * * ”

The beautiful princess with grey eyes then translated the words of the golden-eyed king.

“The king expresses her gratitude for this welcome.”

Her gentle smile charmed even the aged count, and not solely due to her beauty. The man had been friendly towards other races to begin with, but this caused him to rethink the matter even further.

A great many nobles and people at large felt nothing but terror and chills down their spines at the term “demon lord,” but seeing this Fairy Princess in front of them would surely turn that sort of thinking on its head. The Golden King was naturally no less beautiful, but with the unbelievably gentle air about her, her sister had a different sort of charm entirely.

Members of the city guard in Kreuz were charged with watching over the banquet, but even they forgot their duties, distracted by the sight. It was hard to blame them, considering how overwhelmingly beautiful she was.

To start with, it had been reported that a great many members of the guards had offered to give up their day off in order to take on this mission. Considering their enthusiasm towards their work, they could be forgiven for the momentary distraction.

The captain in charge of the guards was at the age where he would soon be retiring, but apparently he was deeply moved by being assigned a task of such

honor at the end of his career.

When the Fairy Princess smiled at him and thanked him personally, he was just so overwhelmed that he ended up wiping the corner of his eye with a handkerchief.

As they were both guests at an evening party in the capital, he was already acquainted with the black haired and garbed Platinum Hero. After offering a perfectly composed Labandese-style greeting, the man smoothly moved to escorting the princess from Vassilios.

With every little movement, the princess's sparkling platinum hair swayed along. The way she smiled warmly at Dale made it clear where the "Platinum" in his nickname came from.

It would seem that the Platinum Hero and the Fairy Princess were every bit about as close in reality as they were in the epic sung about them.

This also made it quite obvious how a hero had become acquainted with the Golden King, a demon lord.

A hero who played the leading role in defeating the demon lords called calamities, and a demon lord's younger sister... They really were a shining symbol of the new relationship between Vassilios and Laband.

Well, that was all what Count Kleinmifel thought, but the reality of the situation was ultimately just a bit different.

"I can't, I can't, I just can't...!" Latina said, desperately pleading her case to Dale as her previous smile shifted to a firmer expression.

"That's not true at all. You're behaving yourself like a proper princess," Dale responded, comforting Latina in a low voice while his smile tempered through high society remained firmly in place.

"Chrysos, you didn't say anything about persisting on pretending you don't understand the language..."

"It is simply more convenient in several ways if I do not employ Western Continental," Chrysos responded, sounding disinterested. Not once had she ceased carefully observing the Labandese guests. The aloof girl from the Ocelot

was now nowhere to be seen, replaced with a resolute visage befitting the ruler of a nation.

“Dale, you’re different from normal, too...”

“Well... After a while I got used to behaving myself in places like this, I guess...”

While the usual level of intimacy between the two was missing from the conversation, by the standards of the world at large they were still acting sufficiently familiar.

Latina had thought herself sufficiently prepared to act as princess of Vassilios, but it turned out this was all too much for the girl so used to life as a commoner.

†

A bit before Latina appeared at the banquet at the lord’s manor...

After Latina accepted Gregor’s proposal and strengthened her resolve, things moved forward at a breakneck pace.

The envoys had already arrived at the manor, so there was no time to spare. The thoughtless girl who was supposed to be at the core of that group needed to be returned to her proper place as soon as possible.

Normally, it wouldn’t make sense to say that the Golden King couldn’t be seen publicly for religious reasons. However, she hadn’t officially shown herself before the townsfolk back in her own country, either. Of course, that had been solely for security reasons. While the Second Demon Lord was still alive and well, she only interacted with the bare minimum people possible and was only ever informed of anything through writing, and not only her appearance but even her gender were kept secret.

Alongside the news of the hated Second Demon Lord’s demise, information about Chrysos herself had start to spread throughout town, but everything was still only just getting started.

For now, though, Chrysos decided to use the situation to her advantage.

Dale and Latina couldn’t help wondering if her free-spirited antics would

continue, but they didn't dare speak their minds. After all, the way they lived their mundane lives despite their growing fame was hardly different.

To start with, several of the devil envoys visited the Ocelot in secret. Normally such a secret visit wouldn't be very easy for envoys from another nation to pull off, but their guide Gregor and the guards tasked with patrolling were also in on it. While they felt bad, as he was supposed to be the top official in Kreuz, they figured it was best not to let the count know, the sudden development likely not being good for his elderly heart.

When the members of the envoy group arrived, they got down on their knees before Latina and started to cry.

Faced with such an abrupt reaction in the middle of the store from people they had never even met, Dale, Kenneth, and the regulars all looked bewildered.

Latina, meanwhile, tilted her head a little, then looked like she suddenly remembered something and got down on her knees too and took their hands, looking flustered.

“ * * * * * . * * * * * ”

“ * * * * * ... * * * * * ”

“ * * * * * ... * * * * * ”

They seemed to be apologizing over and over while sobbing, while Latina responded to them in a gentle voice while wearing a bit of a troubled smile on her face.

The one to explain the situation to everyone left dumbfounded turned out to be Chrysos of all people.

“Our parents held relatively high positions in Vassilios.”

Their mother was the priestess who held the highest authority in Vassilios due to the lack of a demon lord, while their father was a guru who taught a great many people who held influence in the nation. And so, the “relatively” Chrysos had used was a bit of an understatement. However, the folks listening had no way of knowing.

“There were many who regretted being unable to protect Platina and Rag when my sister’s exile was decided. Rag’s last request was that his students stay in his homeland and help me, and they agreed, but... Even so, it always ate away at them.”

A flicker of regret crossed Chrysos’s face. As an adult, she now understood that her father and sister left on their own so that she could have even one ally more as the ruler of the nation.

And so, in order to fulfill the wishes of their dead master, they pushed forward in aiding with the country’s reforms, so that the nation’s young ruler wouldn’t be derided as someone unreliable.

“When Platina stayed in Vassilios, she didn’t see more than a small fraction of the court ladies serving there, yes?”

“That’s true,” Dale agreed, knowing first hand from all the time he spent clinging to Latina while she was recuperating. Or, more accurately, the people meeting her were limited to reduce how many people saw the deplorable hero fawning over her. Of course, there was no way Chrysos was about to mention that.

“When my visit to this country was decided, there were a number who wished to come along and see that Platina was alright with their own two eyes. That is how it is.”

That meant the students of their father, as well as the caretakers who helped take care of the twins when they were young. The girls had been raised in an environment where they saw very few people, but that also meant that the few they did see were especially trusted by their late parents.

“There were people who worried about me... Why did I not realize something so obvious when I was little...?”

Latina started to tear up a bit too, perhaps crying in sympathy, causing some of the regulars to break out in awkward smiles. They couldn’t simply sit there unmoved by the sight.

“That’s just how it is when you’re a kid. I’m glad, though. There were other people out there thinking of you, besides just Chrysos,” Dale said in a gentle

tone.

“Yeah...” Latina replied with a joyful smile.

You could tell from her gentler, kinder expression relative to Chrysos that her life had not been entirely hardships.

The tears from the envoys, meanwhile, showed no signs of stopping.

As the emotional scene carried on, the owners were having a quite discussion amongst themselves.

“What a schemer...”

“Well, I think this was more a matter of opportunism than the main objective here...”

The pair were whispering about the fact that Chrysos had orchestrated this tearful reunion, but though their words were a touch harsh, they didn’t really hold it against her.

The members of a certain non-profit organization in Kreuz were Latina’s largest-scale group of allies. And if they learned that there were devils who were seriously concerned about her, that would have a very positive impact on relations.

Now that negotiations were kicking off between Vassilios and Laband, a town this close to the border was of utmost importance. And the impression the locals had of the neighboring devils was likely to dramatically affect that. And though it may not apply to the whole race, the men with tough faces who frequented this shop and doted on their favorite adorable waitress would at the very least speak highly of the devils who served under Chrysos.

“Now then...” Chrysos stated, calling to attention the court ladies present from amongst all the tearful voices.

“Hmm?”

“I shall carry out the pledge I have made.”

“Huh?” Latina questioned, tilting her head.

In an instant, the platinum-haired girl was surrounded by court ladies and was

taken into one of the Ocelot's guest rooms under Chrysos's orders.

Latina had no clue what was going on, but Dale knew exactly what Chrysos meant, prompting a different question.

"...What about you?"

"I am fine. I shall simply change for the banquet," Chrysos bluntly replied.

Apparently, she must have found such things tiresome.

The second Latina showed herself again, the inside of the Ocelot erupted into pandemonium. Describing it as a wretched sight of wailing and lamenting didn't quite capture it properly. But still, words fail to sufficiently describe the chaos that erupted.

At any rate, Dale had fainted immediately. It was an instant kill attack (though he wasn't dead). He was the most powerful, ultimate, extraordinary of heroes, but that blow had simply proved too intense. And so he started writhing in agony, then fell to the floor with a crash. Just when it looked like he was about to pick himself back up, he simply smiled weakly and gave a thumbs up, as if to tell the court ladies they had done a good job.

Still, he was a hero who was famous the world over, so the word "deplorable" didn't even begin to cover his actions.

It was easy to guess at the reactions from the regulars, too.

However, this time the men from the group of envoys joined in, too. They saw not only how the young girl they once knew had grown, but also a glimpse of her mother, the priestess, and they started sobbing once again.

And at the same time, the men were also cherishing the sight of the Fairy Princess. They truly needed no words, and the barriers of race and age may as well have not existed. The thoughts of everyone there joined together as one. In a way, it may have actually been a rather harmonious sight.

The girl known as the Platinum Princess was undoubtedly living up to the "princess" part of that nickname right now.

Atop her painstakingly combed platinum hair sat seven colors of sparkling gemstones. And the gold and silver ornamentation dangling from her seemingly

restored black horns jangled as they swayed ever so slightly.

The sash she wore had foreign patterns woven into it, with the color seeming to shift depending on the angle from which it was viewed. And the Vassilios-style dress she wore elegantly followed the contours of her body, accentuating her feminine beauty.

“Ah, the makeup technique is different too, isn’t it?”

“There’s definitely a different feel about her. So that’s it?”

“It’s totally different. I see... The coloration on her cheeks and eyelids positively sparkles, doesn’t it?” Rita said, expressing her admiration in a completely different manner from the men. Furthermore, she shot an astonished look at her husband for his dense remark. There was another person far more deserving of that reaction than her husband, however.

“If Dale was going to have this big of a reaction, maybe it would’ve been better to show him in advance.”

“Yeah...”

It would have been utterly unbearable if he had reacted like that while attending the banquet at the lord’s manor.

Concerns of that nature continued to run through the minds of the Ocelot’s owners as they saw Dale and Latina to their carriage. As for Chrysos, the plan was to have her ride along with them and slip into the manor amidst the hustle and bustle.

Incidentally, the eldest child of the Ocelot was inconsolable for the entire night after learning that he had missed the chance to see his beloved big sis all dressed up.

Further incidentally, the aloof pup who had left to play with the boy was soon found curling up and sleeping next to Latina in the lord’s manor, as if it was only natural. None were entirely sure how he had gotten in, he simply appeared there abruptly before anyone had noticed. When they saw him, Dale unwittingly gave a sigh, while Gregor looked simply dumbfounded.

This having been the same as his appearance in Kreuz, it seemed that the

aloof pup's infiltration skills were truly frightening.

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At the peak of nervousness before the dinner began, Latina grabbed hold of her fork and knife. While her actions weren't rushed, she was clearly feeling incredibly awkward. It looked that way to Dale's experienced eye, at least, though she was certainly managing to avoid seeming rude. As a matter of fact, she was demonstrating the elegant table manners one would expect of royalty, her natural grace shining through.

Even so, Latina seemed to have remembered her previous concern, as whenever a dish was carried out, she explained its ingredients and cooking method as thoroughly as possible to her sister and the envoys.

"See, you can simply explain everything about every dish that concerns you by being here with me, Platina."

"We're being treated to such a nice feast, but I'm so nervous that I can't really tell what I'm tasting, which is a shame..."

The sisters were talking in the devil tongue, so Dale's limited vocabulary kept him from understanding the entire conversation. And yet...

I don't know what they're saying, but I figure Latina must be saying something unfortunate... Dale thought as he continued to eat, the formal expression on his face softening into a bit of an awkward smile.

"Hmm..."

"Why are you making such a face?"

"I can more or less tell what seasonings they used, but there seems to be some sort of hidden flavor... But even so, it's not like I can just ask them what it is..."

"For you to go so far, would that not perhaps be a bad habit of yours, Platina?"

"I mean, when it comes to meals, if I just know how something's made, then I can make it myself...! And delicious food is important!"

Ah, yeah, she's definitely saying something really regrettable...

Dale felt rather hapless, having picked up on the gist of what they were talking about from the expressions on their faces as well as those of the envoys.

There were seats prepared for chatting after the banquet, too.

Latina was seated next to Chrysos in order to translate, as the Golden King was currently “unable” to understand Western Continental. Though Dale was far from a stranger, he remained stunned by how beautiful the twins were. The ongoing stares from Count Kleinmifel and the other influential guests came as no surprise.

Some attempted to approach and speak to them, wanting to get even a little bit closer, but Latina fended them off in an inoffensive manner. The knowledge of acting like a lady that Rose had once hastily pounded into her was seriously proving useful at the moment. And apparently the people she was talking to assumed her slight awkwardness was due to her being from a foreign nation, so they thought nothing of it.

Even so, she still occasionally let slip some complaints.

“Geez, I want to go home... I want to go home... And if I can’t, then I at least want to snuggle up under a blanket...!”

Ever since she was little, she had a habit of bundling herself up in a blanket when something scary happened or she was feeling uneasy.

“You’ve still got a long ways to go...” Dale said with a strained smile, fully aware of her situation.

He turned and looked at Latina’s face, seeing that she was on the verge of tears. Once he saw that face, Dale, with his unbounded affection for Latina, had no choice left but to pamper and comfort her. He took a step closer in order to scoop her up in his arms and console her as always... but then he noticed Gregor shooting him a meaningful look.



He stepped back to their previous distance, acting like nothing at all had happened.

“Well, I get that you’re not used to this, but I’m right here next to you... And I know Chrysos was the one who said it, but if you’re in trouble you can just pretend you don’t understand what they’re saying and smile.”

Dale earnestly believed that if Latina just shot them a fleeting smile, most folks would shut their mouths.

Perhaps it would be a bit blunt to say aloud, but he couldn’t deny that it was a likely possibility.

After Dale helped Latina calm down a bit, the music shifted with the count’s signal, and the ball began. The men and women in flashy outfits who advanced to the center of the hall took each other hand in hand and spun around with light, graceful steps.

Just as Count Kleinmifel had suggested with a gentle smile, Latina and Chrysos seated themselves so that they could have a good view of the dance hall.

Apparently this was set up to allow them to enjoy the sight of a foreign dance.

When she learned that she didn’t actually need to dance, Latina felt overwhelmingly relieved. After all, she had completely lacked any sense of rhythm ever since she was a child. If she were invited to dance in the middle of such a huge group of people, the results would be catastrophic.

“...With that said, you do not look all that interested, Platina,” Chrysos said with a bit of a teasing tone.

“That’s not true at all. This is the same sort of sight I admired so much in my picture books. Watching beautiful people in such lovely dresses... I’m enjoying it,” Latina replied, not looking away from the dancers.

The grace with which they danced made their complex steps look deceptively simple. They were far from it, however, but the ability to make something difficult appear simple to others was a true sign of mastery.

If Latina attempted to join in and mimic their beautiful dancing, she would undoubtedly trip over her own feet and fall flat on her rear. Just picturing it was

discouraging.

Latina frowned slightly as she considered that at least when it came to peeling vegetables, she could do *that* smoothly and gracefully.

"I mean, I can't dance... It's just not possible..."

Rose may have taught her manners, but those lessons hadn't extended to the subject of dancing. After all, even if she admired balls, she never dreamed of actually attending one like this. She hadn't practiced because she didn't see the need, but if she had at least learned the basics, maybe things would be different now...

Latina pouted a bit at that thought, glancing at Dale. Normally he would never leave her side, but thanks to his position, it was absolutely necessary that he dance with a number of noble ladies. Dale had been well known in high society to start with, and his meteoric rise in fame caused a sudden explosion of people wanting to socialize with him.

Seeing Dale making faces she had never seen as he took the hands of ladies she didn't know caused Latina to feel an ever so slight tightness in her chest.

"I know there's no helping it because it's for work, geez. I won't throw a tantrum about it like a child, geez."

The way that she was ending every sentence in "geez" made it clear how much Latina was sulking.

Chrysos looked at her sister, seeming a bit astounded.

"I do not believe most would be able to offer such open lip service, with both their words and expression..."

Dale wasn't able to hide the fact that his smile was forced and his reply nothing but a formality, and was clearly, openly displeased about being dragged away from Latina. But with that said, at least on the surface he was still minding his manners, so it wasn't a big enough blunder for anyone to call him out on it.

While Chrysos couldn't help but be impressed. When she saw such clear dissatisfaction on her sister's face, despite Dale's openly innocent motives, she couldn't help thinking how alike the two really were.

After the group of envoys departed Kreuz, they moved onwards towards the capital.

Dale had traveled the path many times before, but as Latina's previous trip through was spent flying atop Vint, this was her first time taking this route.

After coming through the forest it was possible to restock at the towns alongside the highway, so there was no need to be concerned about being able to resupply. And so, the beautiful magical beast-led carriage was able to fulfill its original purpose of transporting the elite.

The luxurious, cozy inside of the vehicle served as a private space just for the twin sisters, cut off from the outside world. There was a relaxed, easygoing atmosphere inside, without so much as a guard in sight. And the pup nonchalantly sleeping at their feet only strengthened that feeling.

That faithful hound occasionally wagging his tail was actually quite a capable guard. Since he was there, there was no need to have another person accompanying them at the moment.

"Hmm... This really is tricky, after all..."

"It certainly may be difficult, but once you memorize the rules, it shall become a good bit easier. What about this one, Platina?"

"Um... the spelling here is a little different... It's pretty interesting studying language, isn't it? Maybe I should use the opportunity to start learning Eastern Regional..."

The twins were holding a study session inside the vehicle, as they decided it would be a waste to spend the long journey doing nothing but idly chatting away.

Latina could speak the devil tongue, but she couldn't read or write it. As an ideographic language, the devil language had a vast number of characters, and its grammar was also quite complex. Since she had left her home country when she was young, though, Latina had never had a chance to study the characters. And no matter how clever of a girl Latina may be, there just wasn't anything to be done about that considering the circumstances.

Chrysos was still studying the human language, Western Continental, too. She had grown rather skilled at conversing, but she was still learning the writing.

And so, the two of them decided to study the written languages together.

After hearing that, Gregor was impressed by their dedication, but Dale looked dumbfounded. The twins really were workaholics to the core, not able to feel at ease unless they were using their time in a meaningful, efficient manner.

Latina and Chrysos were the only ones riding in the vehicle pulled by the magical beast, while the group of envoys were riding in a carriage prepared for them by Laband.

Unlike the route to Kreuz which required blazing a trail down trackless paths, the route to the capital had a properly maintained highway, so it was possible to travel by carriage. And the Laband side prepared one out of consideration for the Vassilios side, due to the long journey they were making.

Dale and Gregor were primarily tasked with guard duty, so they were part of the procession on horseback.

The stunning, beautiful carriage, combined with the fact that they were also accompanied by soldiers on foot, made it clear that this procession was no normal convoy of merchants. It was hard to call it unnecessary, though, even with the combination of Gregor's excellent leadership and Dale's solo horseback skills and extreme vigilance.

But with that said, there were no signs of an attack by an opposing faction, which was what they had been worried about.

The one spearheading the movement for friendly relations between the two nations was Duke Eldstedt, the prime minister. And there was no way that Gregor's father would allow guests of the state to be exposed to such a shameful sight.

And though the assailants would have no way of knowing this, even if there was an attack, it would result in an absolute overkill retaliation by the human weapon known as the Platinum Hero, wiping them out entirely. After all, pointing a blade at the envoys was the same as pointing a blade at Latina, who was at her sister's side. It needn't be said that she was the person most

important to Dale, who was already a person deeply invested in protecting others.

Anyone attempting such an act would receive an overwhelming demonstration of his abilities.

That in mind, the duke's attempts to cut off any such attacks in advance were the far more humane solution.

There were towns dotted along the path between Kreuz and the capital.

When ordinary travelers headed from Kreuz to the capital, it would take them nearly a week by carriage. The towns alongside the well maintained highway were well equipped for handling travelers, so folks riding the carriages would plan around resting at inns along the way, avoiding the need to camp outside.

When the envoy group arrived in the town where they would be spending the night, they found a welcome banquet waiting for them.

That sort of reception was only natural when it came to greeting guests of the state, both from the point of view of the nation and from that of the local lords running such towns.

And when she saw that friendly welcome, Latina...

"It's plenty spacious in that carriage, so I can just sleep there."

Started completely shutting herself off from the others.

"It's not like I don't get how you feel, but I don't think you can do that..."

"I'm fine sleeping outside. It's actually kind of fun, since it's something different than usual."

"I'm telling you, it's no good..."

"And I wouldn't be worried as long as you were with me, Dale, so..."

A silence filled the air.

"Should you not be firmly scolding her all the way through to the end?"

When the "princess" made the suggestion of prioritizing comfort and camping, Dale should have immediately admonished her and said it was impossible considering both her safety and her position, but he quickly fell prey

to how soft he was on her.

Gregor having to always be the voice of reason when Dale was being foolish was a far greater task than those around them may have realized.

Neither country involved had ever expected that someone who undoubtedly held the position of “princess” would have such a common way of thinking.

Still, Latina was skilled at anything and everything, so she was able to pull through these days, somehow. The exhaustion definitely did pile up, though, as by the time they arrived at the capital, Latina was positively listless. Naturally, that was more mental exhaustion than physical, though.

As a result, even though she was completely and utterly a commoner on the inside, the people around her had an incredibly high opinion of her, even more so than she thought.

When they were welcomed at each town she greeted them with a stiff smile fixed to her face, with only Dale able to recognize her awkwardness due to knowing her so well. But from his point of view, she was sitting there with that forced smile precisely because her nervousness had reached its peak. To anyone who didn't know her, though, she must have just seemed a gentle-mannered and mature princess who assisted her sister.

It also helped that Chrysos was seated next to her, giving off a genuinely regal air. The twins may have looked identical on the outside, but they really did each have a different feel about them. And when added to her charming looks, fitting for the heroine of an epic tale, those around her regarded her as some sort of reclusive princess.

Seeing her lost in thought in the corner at the banquets fanned a desire to protect her in a great many of the men from the Laband side.

If her protector, the famed Platinum Hero, wasn't by her side, it wouldn't be strange at all for plenty of self-proclaimed devotees to form a line to express their regard.

“Dale...”

“Hmm?”

“I want to polish pots...”

“I don’t know that you should be saying stuff like that where people can overhear...”

That was the rather deplorable reason she was really looking so troubled and distant, but none of the other people attending were aware of that fact.

“I want to polish pots, and clean, and wipe down the floors... I want to polish them with wax so they’re nice and sparkly... I would even be fine trading places with those maids and making round trips to and from the kitchen...”

“I really do need to study the devil language, but still, I get the feeling that I’m better off not knowing what you’re saying right now...”

There really was a huge distance between the reality of things and the image those around her held.

As a result, Latina’s exhaustion reached its peak (though nobody blamed her for it), and she was completely worn out by the time they reached the capital.

Waiting for her there, though, was someone that Latina knew quite well: Her etiquette instructor, Rose.

Rose was quite fond of Latina, but unlike Dale, she could also be strict when need be rather than constantly pampering her.

While Latina stood there dumbfounded at the sight of her when they met at Duke Eldstedt’s manor, Rose gently smiled back, and then called out, “Ms. Latina.”

“Wah!”

There was a chill behind Rose’s voice. And since she was so sensitive to that sharp tone, Latina let out that strange sound and then stood up straight.

Standing next to them, Dale felt like it was the sort of relationship you would see between a superior and their subordinate in the military.

“In this place, I will always refer to you as ‘Ms. Latina.’”

Rose made sure to lay that fact down in advance, since Latina’s current standing was that of the younger sister of Vassilios’s ruler. And it simply

wouldn't make sense for a lower-ranking noble like Rose to act like the superior of a princess from a neighboring country.

However, Latina and Chrysos were already rather close to Rose on a personal level. Those attending from the Vassilios side, including the court ladies and guards waiting on Chrysos, were all acquainted with Rose from the time she visited Vassilios, so they showed no sign of finding fault with the matter.

And of course, as someone who was so strict about manners, there was most certainly a reason why she wouldn't call Latina "princess."

"You will be having an audience with His Majesty, so make sure not to act so foolish in front of him."

"Um... Um... Lady Rose..."

"Your sister, the king, is not familiar with Labandese manners. There surely exist those who are ignorant of that and would view any missteps harshly."

Rose was now fully acting as a mentor in etiquette and giving her guidance. Her deep indigo eyes were casting a stern gaze toward Latina.



“Ms. Latina, I believe you are the only one familiar enough with both Vassilios and Laband to stay by your sister’s side and protect her.”

That’s way too big of a responsibility... I just can’t...

“There is no time for complaining.”

“Right!”

Rose had managed to clearly chastise Latina, even though she was only thinking to herself. But Latina’s earnest nature made her exceptionally easy to read, so that was no surprise.

Rose was certainly a bit of a strict teacher.

“And so, I was thinking I would have you attend a tea party hosted by Sir Gregor’s elder sister, her highness Lady Fania.”

“Huh?”

“Be at ease. Lady Fania was my own mentor in proper etiquette, and she is aware of your circumstances to some degree.”

Gregor’s half-sister Fania was the one who doted especially hard on Rose when she was brought into the Eldstedt family at a young age.

Before she was known as the princess of Vassilios, Latina’s name was spread about those in the duke’s camp as the foster child the hero directly under the duke was thoroughly doting on.

Even though Fania had left home upon marriage, her father served as the nation’s prime minister, and it certainly wasn’t as if she had grown estranged from her family.

“I’m sure that Lady Fania will play along with your ‘rehearsal,’ Ms. Latina...”

“Wah... Huh...? Um, Lady Rose...”

Realizing she had no place to run, Latina’s gaze darted from side to side.

Sparing a glance at her sister in that state, Chrysos bluntly stated, “I shall be having a briefing session with those from Laband, and handling final adjustments, so we shall have to say farewell for the time being, Platina.”

Officially Chrysos didn't understand Western Continental, so that did make a certain amount of sense. It was impossible to tell who could be watching in the capital and the royal estate, so she couldn't exactly treat it as a pleasant jaunt with Latina as she had been thus far.

Regardless of her feelings on the matter, right now Chrysos needed to prioritize her official position.

"...If I recall correctly, your elder sister Lady Fania was crown princess?"

"Officially, His Majesty has not yet named his successor, so she's the consort of the second prince."

"That certainly sounds dubious, in all manner of ways..."

"In actuality, she holds the second greatest authority of any woman, after only the queen."

It was no surprise that Dale's expression suggested this whole affair was a pain, as he couldn't help but think there was some sort of meaning behind the fact that the second prince was considered heir apparent of the throne. The continual delays only further supported his suspicions, as a successor would normally have been named by now.

It was only natural that the place be called a den of demons. Dale really preferred to live within his means as a commoner, and would just as well have nothing to do with this world if he could help it.

And with her commoner mindset, Latina felt much the same.

Dale and Gregor's explanation had been meant to calm Latina down, but ended up having the exact opposite effect.

When she realized that she was going to be dealing with a serious big shot, Latina became so panicked that it was written clearly on her face. And naturally, that reflected poorly on her.

Rose looked straight at Latina, a perfectly ladylike smile on her face.

"It would seem that there is need for a thorough review, yes?"

"Wah...! Um, ah... Yes, please..."

And so, Latina ended up undergoing some unexpectedly spartan training in court etiquette.

Rose led Latina to a section of the palace that was under the jurisdiction of Fania, the consort to the second prince. Well, it was called a “section,” but it was an entirely separate manor where she and the second prince lived.

Normally, when faced with such a beautiful sight like something out of a picture book, Latina would’ve darted around restlessly as she looked at everything, her mouth hanging open. But sure enough, this time around Latina successfully composed herself, remembering her earlier training.

She was seriously frightened by the indigo eyes of the girl standing next to her, whose utter lack of warmth betrayed the smile below them.

They were lead by a servant into a beautiful garden full of proudly blooming flowers. There was a great variety on display, and it seems like even the way the colors were laid out had been perfectly calculated. Even the ironwork arch was in perfect harmony with everything else.

“Wah...” Latina unwittingly let slip, overwhelmed by the beauty and sweet aroma. “Lady Rose...”

“Within the palace, your status is higher than my own, Ms. Latina. You mustn’t abase yourself towards me.”

“Hmm... It’s just that you taught me magic too, Lady Rose... But I’ll try my best.”

Seeing Latina having trouble due to her natural politeness, Rose couldn’t help but give a strained smile.

Then, Latina continued on, “They didn’t have a flower garden like this in the temple in Vassilios... Would it be possible to make an opportunity for Chrysos to visit a place like this, too?”

“Yes, that nation has an arid environment, does it not? So there are no places where flowers blossom?”

“There was a place where they were grown to be used in rituals for Quirmizi... But that was pretty limited, and you couldn’t ever enjoy being surrounded by

this many flowers.”

“In that case, let us inform Lady Fania. Perhaps that knowledge will be useful when welcoming guests from Vassilios in the future.”

Latina felt like this conversation leaned just a bit more towards normal, but when she noticed the person waiting for them in the gazebo in the middle of the garden, she stood up straight. The woman didn’t look all that much like Gregor. Her hair was a honey-colored blonde, she had an oval-shaped face, and the overall impression she gave off was completely different than that of her half-brother, completely lacking his martial discipline and foreign feel. But they certainly were similarly attractive, if nothing else.

Though they otherwise didn’t look too much alike, Latina felt satisfied when she noticed the woman’s willful, unusually refreshing ice-blue eyes. She was glad to find proof that this woman really was related to her acquaintance.

“I am truly grateful for your invitation at this time,” Latina said as a greeting to the owner of the garden, ever so slightly grabbing the hem of her swaying Vassilios-style skirt. It was a more restrained action as it lacked the plentiful drape of a Labandese dress, but the woman in front of her didn’t seem to mind, and in fact gave her a pleasant smile back.

“You really are a princess every bit as adorable as a fairy, just as the rumors say.”

Latina just smiled, having trouble knowing how to respond, so Rose said, “Lady Fania, this is Princess Platina Muto Cori Mov. Thank you so much for listening to my unreasonable request.”

Latina had been given the role name of “Muto” in Dale’s home village of Tislow. Since Dale used his role name of “Reki” in place of a family name, Latina did the same and combined it with her real name of Platina to get the name of Platina Muto.

The devils of Vassilios didn’t use family names, but it was normal to refer to themselves as “child of X,” with that X being their mother’s name. And so Rose followed that tradition and introduced Latina using vocabulary in Western Continental that meant “daughter of Mov,” but Latina herself was left looking utterly puzzled.

It took a couple of seconds before she even realized that Rose was referring to her.

Normally she just used “Latina” (even though it was originally supposed to be a nickname), and she lived in the rougher part of town, so she didn’t have a need to introduce herself using a family name. And so, it took her a bit to realize that her “real” name had taken that form.

By the way, Chrysos hoped to introduce herself as Chrysos Vassilios Cori Mov, inserting the country’s name to indicate that she was its ruler. There was no such custom in Vassilios, but when she heard that Latina’s “Muto” was a role name from Tislow, she wanted something similar to express her role as king.

She really did have quite the sister complex, wanting everything to match like that.

“So that’s what my name’s like now...” Latina muttered absently.

“Ms. Latina?”

“It’s nothing!” she quickly responded.

“Well then, let us practice your greeting for when you have your audience with His Majesty. Lady Fania will explain in detail about how to greet lords and ladies.”

“Rose informed me about you in the past. I looked forward to this meeting. She praised your memorization skills, after all,” Fania said with a smile. Her words were completely friendly, but still, Latina’s attempts to maintain her composure left her sweating.

Please don’t expect so much out of me...

She really did think like a commoner, for that thought to come to mind.

And with her graceful beauty and gentle manners, Fania really was Rose’s mentor.

The first thing that Latina had thoroughly pounded into her was how to properly bow like a lady. It felt harsh even to someone like Latina, a member of the hardy devil race who had also spent day after day running all about the Ocelot while waitressing there.

Despite their brilliant surroundings, the coaching was as intense as that of a professional sport.

It was only when Latina's knees started to give out that she was finally allowed to take a break to drink some tea.

"You seem to have gotten down the basic process, yes?" Fania said, giving the girl a passing mark.

"Thank you," Latina responded with a smile while holding a teacup.

The tea had been carefully prepared with high class tea leaves, and it made for a wonderful flavor with very little bitterness to it. The snacks provided alongside it weren't overly lacking in sweetness, and struck a perfect balance when eaten together with the tea.

Latina wasn't able to pay attention to the flavor and ingredients though, as she had to devote her full attention to eating in such a way that not a single crumb fell down, which caused her to shed tears in her heart.

"Still, Labandese manners certainly do seem difficult in foreign attire, do they not?"

"You think so as well, Lady Fania? The outfits from Vassilios are terribly beautiful, so I would have liked to let those present see her in one, but it certainly wouldn't be easy..." Rose replied, only for a playful, mischievous expression to flash over Fania's face. Latina, meanwhile, was completely enraptured by the fine decorations applied to the snacks, so she wasn't paying attention to their conversation.

"I hear tell that Princess Platina and her sister, the king, look quite alike."

"Yes. And the two get along quite well, so I am certain that if they were to wear matching outfits, they would become the main topic of conversation amongst the lords."

"We should be certain to create such an opportunity."

It was starting to seem that Latina's debut as a princess in the capital wouldn't be limited to just one evening party.

"In that case, how about inviting the envoys to this garden? I believe that

would make them quite happy, as Vassilios has quite limited plant life, and such a place would thus feel quite unusual to them.”

“Oh, my. That is a terribly fine idea.”

Thanks to their long years of living like real sisters, the difference in their positions couldn’t be felt very strongly in the conversation Rose and Fania were having.

Having given her ready consent with a smile when Rose raised the desire Latina had voiced just a short while ago, Fania then called over her maid. She then gave an order to adjust the schedule for the near future.

“If you were to wear a foreign outfit when attending the banquet after your audience with His Majesty, it may leave quite the strong impression. And you have strived to learn the manners of our nation, so would it not be good to use the opportunity to display them?”

Despite the grin on Fania’s face, Latina didn’t realize the situation she would soon find herself in.

Fania had a previous record of finding Rose so adorable when she was young that she would frequently treat the girl like a doll and dress her up in gaudy outfits.

There was a need to first have Latina wear a dress, in order to further practice Labandese manners. Or at least, that was the logic presented as to why she needed to pick out an outfit befitting her royal status, while also giving an even stronger impact than her nickname of Platinum Fairy Princess. Those were the prerequisites she was given.

“I know that you prefer subdued colors, Ms. Latina, but I believe a deeper color would look even nicer on you.”

“Vassilios nationally reveres Banafsaj, do they not? Perhaps a violet would be good, then. Ah, but we also must consider how it pairs with the outfit of her sister, the king, yes?”

“Hmm...?”

Latina finally noticed that Rose and Fania were happily chatting away, but she

still had yet to realize what would happen to her next, so she simply tilted her head in confusion.

There was a chandelier brilliantly illuminating the banquet hall. It was made by combining delicately crafted and polished, elaborately cut parts, and it alone was enough to demonstrate the prosperity of the nation.

As it was meant for entertaining guests, the banquet hall was especially extravagant, even for the already luxurious royal palace. And that only made sense, as it was a key weapon in the war known as foreign relations, meant to display the strength of the nation.

The most treasured color in Laband was that of their patron god Ahmar, red. And so the banquet hall was colored in a deep, subtle crimson, accompanied by a shade of gold.

Adorning the ceiling was a painting depicting the nation's founding. It was a heroic, cheerful tale that praised the nation's majesty.

The banquet hall itself really was like a flawless piece of art.

The banquet held there to welcome the envoys was a small-scale affair, meant to take place before the two nations officially opened diplomatic relations. It was only described as "small-scale" because of the number of people participating, though. Both the prestige of those in attendance and the splendor of the event itself were more than sufficient for demonstrating Laband's prosperity to another nation.

And as for the Laband side, when they saw Vassilios's ruler the Golden King and her sister the Platinum Fairy Princess enter the hall, they were so overwhelmed that even sighs of admiration caught in their throats.

While she was clad in beautiful foreign attire, it was more the elder sister's long platinum hair and strong-willed golden eyes that her nickname was derived from that drew the gaze of observers.

And her sister the princess had the same platinum colored hair, only hers was done up. She wore a darkly-colored Labandese dress, and was greeting the various lords with absolutely perfect manners.

The sisters possessed such overwhelming natural beauty that any mere

decoration or piece of art paled in comparison.

Behind them, Rose (who had served as an unofficial ambassador to Vassilios) was acting as an interpreter so that Fania, consort to the second prince, could have a friendly chat with the Golden King.

Very few in Laband possessed comparable beauty to the twins, or similarly great renown, so their presence brought immediate vibrancy to their corner of the room.

And when a certain someone saw them...

“Latina’s even more amazing than I thought...” Dale murmured from a short distance away.

“Should you not be standing at her side?” Gregor asked his friend, wearing an outfit fitting for a member of the ducal family.

“If you mean that it’s rare for me to *not* be right next to her, then just come out and say so clearly,” Dale said in pointed response to Gregor’s roundabout comment, before turning to look at Latina again.

No matter how you looked at her, she was an absolutely perfect princess. It really was something, since even Dale couldn’t help but think that despite being thoroughly acquainted with how she was normally.

It was hard to imagine that behind the facade was a commoner girl who enjoyed polishing cookware.

“She said she was rehearsing, or undergoing special training or something... Normally something that last-minute doesn’t work out so well though, right?”

“She gives off a rather delicate impression, but I believe she certainly has some guts as well.”

“Well... Yeah, I’d definitely say that’s true, seeing how she faced off against those gruff old-timers without flinching even back when she was just an adorable little thing...”

Dale gave a sigh, in the back of his mind he was thinking about the night before. Latina had buried herself in a heap of pillows in the guest room in the palace that was assigned to her, sobbing away. It was sort of like she had

returned to being a little kid after being pushed to the limit of what she could emotionally handle.

Dale's doting idiot nature couldn't help overruling any reservations he had about where they were, considering how thoroughly exhausted she looked. It was clear to him how harsh her special training must have been.

Truthfully, it wasn't just the training, as the way she had been forced to change into one dress after another had also contributed greatly to her exhaustion.

In other words, the dress Latina had borrowed to wear today was the end result of those countless other trials. It really spoke to the skill of Fania's personal seamstresses, the way that it fit Latina so well that you couldn't even tell that it had been borrowed. However, it was also necessary for her to put on a corset, which she never normally wore. When the maids squeezed her tightly into it, she couldn't help but think that if one of those girls happened to be a hero, she would have been defeated then and there.

There were no past precedents of a demon lord being killed by a corset, and if it happened, it would probably never happen ever again.

Whether the fact was fortunate or not, Dale knew nothing of the personal fashion show that Fania had Latina hold. If he had seen it, he probably would have fainted on the spot in spite of all the important people from around the country watching, which would make for a truly deplorable display. And if he learned that he had missed the opportunity to see such a thing, he would surely stamp his feet in frustration and make a real nuisance of himself.

But since he just didn't know, he was acting normally, at least for the time being. That act of moderation had naturally been Rose's decision, and was the perfect way to handle the matter.

"Well, that's for the best... That place is scary."

"Yes, that's certainly true..."

The men were daunted because that place was like a microcosm of the palace at large, a place for women to fight.

It went without saying that Rose was grading Latina strictly, even while she

was being attended to by the maids. And in the palace, there was no division between men and women, as everyone harshly judged each and every action made by everyone else.

On the surface, it looked like Chrysos and Fania were just having a pleasant chat. However, naturally that wasn't all there was to it. All the while Fania was making sure to act with restraint towards the nobles from her own country, while also keeping an eye on Latina and the others from Vassilios, who were not fully familiar with high society in Laband. And she also carried out her duties as the consort of the second prince, in order to use these new friendly relations with their neighboring country to strengthen her own position.

Meanwhile, faced with such a lady of character from Laband, Chrysos acted as an ambassador of goodwill between the nations, all the while making sure to use lines that wouldn't cause her country harm.

This was the sort of terrifying place Latina now found herself in, needing to act as expected of a princess.

Even if Dale was expected to act according to his station, swinging a sword out in the wild suited him better. Considering that, it was only natural that he found his current straits daunting.

"My elder sister seems to be quite pleased, having made the acquaintance of the Golden King," Gregor said while looking over at Fania. It was also showing now and again on his face that he certainly didn't want to get any closer. As he was born to a renowned family, Gregor was raised closer to high society than Dale, but he still placed greater importance upon his life as a warrior.

The pair gave long sighs in perfect tandem.

"Well, Latina seems to always let her guard down when I'm nearby, so I'll stay just a bit further away..."

Dale was first and foremost when it came to the people that Latina let dote on her. Right now her nervousness was at its peak, but he couldn't go and stand by her side and risk tipping her over the edge.

"Besides, it's better that I'm the only one who gets to experience that cute side of Latina's."

Dale really never did waver in his beliefs. In a way, it was almost admirable.

At any rate, Latina carried out her duty of playing the role of a sheltered princess from Vassilios, not letting her occasional bouts of airheadedness show on the surface whatsoever.

As for the girl herself, though, inside her head she was like a quivering little bunny with tears in her eyes from start to finish. Everyone around her remained blissfully ignorant of that, however.

And considering she was a princess from a country they'd had no interaction with, she came across as quite knowledgeable about their language and customs. Latina herself was the only one who didn't realize she gave that impression to those looking at her objectively.

And Dale had no intention of telling her that the opinion of the Platinum Fairy Princess was seeing a meteoric rise amongst Labandese high society.

"It's over... It's over..."

Right now, despite her position as the sister of a foreign nation's king, she was currently in the corner of Duke Eldstedt's kitchen, polishing silverware with a cloth while shedding tears and looking like a girl possessed. Of course, since this was the kitchen of the foremost noble family in Laband, everything was already neat and tidy, so there were no stained pots that were truly worth polishing laying about.

I'm at my limit...

Seeing her like that, the corners of Dale's eyes grew warmer and tears of sympathy subconsciously began falling down his cheeks.

†

The audience with the Labandese king ended without incident, bringing the greatest task for the envoys to a close, but Latina's job as a princess in the capital still wasn't over just yet.

One task awaiting her related to something Gregor had told the regulars. Which is to say, a portrait painter of Duke Eldstedt's patronage had heard of the beautiful twin sisters, Vassilios's ruler and princess, and became quite

interested in them.

The last time Latina visited Duke Eldstedt's manor, a portrait was painted of her. And when a noble was as influential as the duke, it was only natural for him to offer his patronage to artists whose skills he recognized. One of them had been so taken with the sight of a girl with a mythical beast, like something out of a legend, that he firmly requested to be allowed to paint her himself.

"Hmm? Could that be..."

"I know."

"Ah... So he really is the person we met last time, isn't he?"

"Yup."

When Gregor introduced the painter to Latina, she was certain that she recognized him, commenting on that fact to Vint.

Vint hadn't been able to follow her to the royal palace, so when she was finally able to pay him some attention in the garden, his tail was wagging enthusiastically.

"Hmm?" Chrysos questioned, tilting her head.

"Vint and I got painted together. It's a little embarrassing, but I was glad that it turned out to be such a pretty picture," Latina said, providing a supplementary explanation. She gave a bit of an embarrassed smile as she reminisced back on the past.

"Hrm..."

From Chrysos's reaction, the topic certainly seemed to have caught her interest.

Chrysos may have been the king of Vassilios, but if she showed clear dissatisfaction on her face, then the painting could never be drawn. The first hurdle that needed to be cleared was showing the painter a relaxed expression.

Still... Dale thought to himself, watching the sisters talk from a distance, *Chrysos's replies are all pretty short, but now that I think on it, they still seem to be communicating just fine.*

“Smell, kinda weird.”

“Smell...? Ah, of the paint?”

“Don’t hate or love.”

“That’s an unusual reply.”

Vint’s response had been unexpected, but Chrysos’s face looked like she had just seen something amusing.

“Oh yeah, is it really alright for you to be having such a carefree conversation when officially, you’re not supposed to understand Western Continental?” Dale asked, having suddenly realized that.

The one to look dissatisfied at that and respond, though, was the aloof pup. “Don’t know devil language. Don’t like.”

“I do not believe there should be any issue when it is a conversation between myself and Platina, though.”

“No. Don’t like,” the aloof pup firmly asserted. Apparently he couldn’t accept Latina and Chrysos having a conversation that didn’t involve him, probably because it felt like he was being ignored.

“Sir Gregor and the duke already know that Chrysos really can speak Western Continental... I don’t think there’s any fooling them now.”

“It will also serve us to display the culture of Vassilios within Laband, wouldn’t you say?” Gregor offered as a reason for the painting, and Chrysos nodded in agreement.

“That coincides with my goal. Right...” she said, holding up one finger. “Draw me together with Platina. Then present me with a copy as well, and I shall readily comply.”

“Chrysos?”

“We cannot live together. Can I not at least seek a memento of you, Platina?”

Seeing her sister sulking like that, Latina fell silent with embarrassment. Then Dale suddenly brought his hands together.

“In that case, could you make a reproduction for Latina too and send it our

way? It'll be like a matching pair."

"You just want it for yourself, don't you?"

"I'm satisfied just having the real Latina always by my side."

"You look a little questionable to me right now, honestly."

Gregor made an exasperated face, but Dale showed no sign of being bothered.

In that way, it was decided that a portrait of Chrysos and Latina would be painted while they were staying at the duke's residence. They were clad in exquisite outfits from Vassilios, and the various goods the envoy group had brought along to serve as gifts now acted as a backdrop.

As the king of Vassilios, Chrysos planned to use herself as a billboard for her nation, using this one portrait as a sort of catalog to introduce others to a portion of their customs.

"Hmm...?" Dale questioned, tilting his head a bit as he looked at the pair lined up in front of the painter. And then when he realized just what felt off to him, he tilted his head even further. "That's rare. You're wearing different outfits."

In part due to Chrysos's desires, the two were dressed in matching outfits at nearly every banquet they had attended in Laband. However, the colors they were wearing were completely different this time around.

"My name and Chrysos's hold the meanings of 'platinum' and 'gold.'"

The dark blue attire Latina had on created a deep coloration through countless layers of thin cloth. And the silver thread delicately embroidered throughout the top layer weaved complex foreign patterns.

"In devil language, each and every character carries a meaning. And the characters for platinum and gold contain the characters for 'moon' and 'sun,' too."

"Put another way, while Platina's name and my own correspond to our titles of 'Golden King' and 'Platinum Fairy Princess,' they also include the meanings of 'sun' and 'moon,'" Chrysos continued on, picking up the explanation from Latina. She was clad in a bright golden yellow outfit, matching her eyes. The

numerous layers of her skirt created a steadily deepening color, and the extravagantly wide hem reached a color close to a crimson. It was light on embroidery, but in exchange, she had on accessories with layers of beads in a style that was unique to Vassilios, as well as golden bracelets.

“I see, so it’s like a moon in the night sky, and the colors of daybreak,” Dale said, looking satisfied.

With that, Chrysos shot him a wicked grin.

“It is only logical to present a variety of outfits in order to better display the culture of my nation, and attaching meaning like this only attracts more attention, does it not?”

Chrysos’s plot certainly bore fruit.

The portrait of the beautiful twins drawn with such an exotic style became a hot topic of discussion amongst the Labandese nobles, who were especially alert to all things novel, and it led to a fad surrounding those sorts of accessories.

Both the portrait itself and reproductions of it were treated as precious, and spread throughout the nation alongside poetic words that compared the lively twins to blossoming flowers.

And that trend wasn’t limited to just the nobles, as it soon started spreading throughout the cities, too.

It went without saying that it also made it to a certain corner of Kreuz, and Dale then heard the poetic words that had been spread: “Vassilios holds a great fortune. Two flowers, akin to the sun and the moon. These twin blooms are revered as the most valuable of all treasures.”

“Yeah, but one of them wasn’t even in that country, though...” Dale couldn’t help but quip.

With that said, the “flower” in that nation undoubtedly held the “flower” elsewhere as the most precious treasure imaginable.

And though the matter had already spread on such a large scale, Dale ultimately decided not to inform Latina about it. Hiding it wouldn’t overturn the

reality of the matter, but for the sake of the girl and her commoner mindset, he chose not to make a big deal out of it.

Dale was denying reality a bit himself too, but well, there was no helping that.

†

Having completed their schedule and learned of Labandese culture, the envoys had become forerunners towards future friendly relations between the nations and safely completed their mission.

And so, the procession was to head back down the highway, then return to Vassilios by way of Kreuz. Unlike the trip there, though, the Golden King would really be among them.

The beautiful magical beast-led carriage was stopped on the highway outside of Kreuz. The envoys received a warm welcome from Count Kleinmifel and plentiful attention from the residents when they arrived on their return trip, but that quieted down once they were outside of town. Meanwhile, Chrysos insisted on staying holed up inside the carriage, surrounded by soldiers acting as guards.

“Chrysos...” Dale muttered quietly outside of the vehicle as the Golden King glared at him. With both of her arms, she was hugging her twin tight. She was clearly resisting because she realized that if she let go, they would be separated once again.

“I’m sorry, Chrysos...” Latina practically whispered to her sister.

“...There is nothing to be done about the fact that you do not wish to return to Vassilios, Platina,” Chrysos replied, understanding what her sister’s words had meant.

For Latina, her old home of Vassilios was not a place that she wanted to return to. Her kind parents were already gone, and since she was raised in secret in the depths of the temple, there weren’t any acquaintances there that she could have a friendly conversation with.

Her memories of being unreasonably exiled and losing everything were far stronger than any happy ones of the place.

That was precisely why Chrysos wanted so badly to change the country that she ruled. But at the same time, she also understood that it would take time to do so.

“I will make it into a place that shall accept you with open arms, without fail.”

“Um, Chrysos... I’m sure I’ll come visit you eventually. I think it would probably be easier for Dale and I that way, after all...”

The lifespans of demon lords and their demons were incomparably longer than those of humans. Surely it would be a lot more convenient in a number of ways to live in a country of devils, who had long lifespans to begin with. Or at least, that was what Latina thought.

“So I don’t consider this a true goodbye.”

“I understand. And if I wish to see you, I simply need to head out once again.”

“Hey, Chrysos, is it really alright for a king to be leaving her country so lightly?” Latina asked with a serious look.

Yeah, no way, Dale thought to himself, but he kept the quip inside out of consideration for the sisters saying farewell.

“As long as you cannot return to Vassilios, that is the only method that we may spend even a brief time together.

“I see... Sorry, Chrysos...”

Don’t go accepting that so easily, Dale quipped inside.

She really was just way too earnest for her own good.

“Just make sure to let us know beforehand next time, alright?”

“My movement is highly classified, so that shall be difficult.”

“It’s a given that you should do that much...” Dale muttered, no longer able to hold back. However, nobody seemed to notice.

Up until the bitter end, the twins paid no heed to the fact that in spite of how she got there, there was a problem with a nation’s ruler staying in a bar on the outskirts of town.

Latina and Chrysos held each other’s hands tight, then brought their faces so

close that their foreheads were almost touching. Their flowing platinum hair intertwined, such that it was hard to tell where one ended and the other began.

“Don’t push yourself too hard, alright?”

“And I do not wish to hear of you ending up in anything but the best of health, Platina.”

“That goes for you too, Chrysos.”

Both thinking of one another, they broke out in slight smiles at the same time.

“ * * * * * ”

“ * * * * * ”

After that secret exchange, they slowly released their grasps, reluctant to part.

As Latina reached the side of the waiting Dale, she looked at him as if she felt she had done something wrong. Before she could say anything, though, he ruffled her hair, just a bit roughly.

Realizing that he was doting on her as always and showing that her feelings could go unspoken, Latina smiled at Dale with tears in her eyes. Dale, meanwhile, responded with his own strained smile.

The magical beast started walking, and the wheels started slowly, heavily turning as the vehicle finally got moving.

Chrysos wore the same exact expression as Latina as she moved further and further away, until she was no longer visible. But even so, Latina kept on standing there, seeing the procession off. There was a sorrow that could be spied about her from behind that words alone couldn’t express, so Dale put his arms around her shoulders and gently embraced her.

“Shall we go back?”

“Yeah...”

As if spurred on by the sad smile on Latina’s face, Dale held her tighter and smiled back.

With that, they turned around and headed back towards Kreuz, to return to

their normal everyday lives. In order to spend their days awash in as much happiness as possible, they headed back.

With that said, it wouldn't be too much longer until a certain demon lord really did become a regular at a bar on the outskirts of town, just as she had claimed she would.

2: Sequel: The Platinum Maiden, Her Best Friend, and a Changing “Everyday”

It had been a turbulent time with Chrysos’s sudden visit and the way that she ended up getting wrapped up in all that “princess” stuff, but things were finally calming down again for Latina.

She flawlessly carried out her daily work at the Ocelot, and also acted as a big sister to Theo and Emma.

It would be a lie to say that she hadn’t admired the princesses she’d seen in the picture books she read every day as a child, and the romance novels that resonated with her after she came of age. But now, Latina couldn’t help feeling like she’d have preferred those stay fairy tales. She was undoubtedly of royal birth and also the fiancée of a man considered a champion the world over, as well as the heroine of an epic admired by a great many young maidens, but that hadn’t all really sunk in until now.

And if she was being honest, employing recipes Kenneth had come up with using the grain that made up Vassilios’s primary diet (which she had received from the envoys) was far more important to her.

“I think it should be something akin to wheat, so...”

“Amazing... It’s edible...”

“You said you tried lightly baking it, right? So I tried kneading in fat and then baking it. And it may not be a bad garnish for some sort of stew...”

The batter had been thicker than the type used for crepes, and it had a sweet aroma despite how lightly baked it was. It was also both soft and exceptionally moist. This was the result of more than just simple baking. Latina could tell that much from just a single bite.

Kenneth had made it sound easy, but he must have tried out all sorts of things before arriving at this flavor. Latina felt even greater respect for her master, and then started to cry, realizing that even the ingredients from her old country

could be made edible with enough effort.

The tears fell so plentifully that Kenneth actually backed away for a moment.

“It really is different when you cook it properly... They had the concept of cooking, but that was all...”

“Is Vassilios really going to be alright?”

“I’d like it if delicious food spread further there, but to do so it would be necessary to increase the rate of import and self-production of food, to increase the amount overall in circulation. If people started monopolizing delicious meals, lots of others would starve to death.”

“That’s... The food being bad may have been slowing down the rate it was being used, huh? That’s a real desperate measure, but I guess it’s something they’ve had in place for years...”

That evening, Latina secretly gave Kenneth’s carefully prepared, lightly baked bread made out of Vassilios grain to Dale for dinner. Dale seemed to have noticed it was something different, but he never managed to guess at its identity. And Latina didn’t ever tell him what it was, either.

That sort of everyday life was only natural to them.

An everyday life where no real changes stood out brought its own sort of happiness for them.

Just when Latina thought that such days had returned, she left to enjoy the first nice, relaxing visit with her best friend in a while, only to let out a shrill, hysteric, “Huh?!”



Chloe had welcomed Latina into her room, which didn't seem to have changed a bit. And now she was just sipping tea as Latina sat there frozen in shock. Seeming a bit bored, almost, she started meaninglessly fidgeting with her bed cover with her finger.

"Huh? Huh? Chloe? What do you mean?"

Latina's brain had apparently managed to snap out of its torpor, and immediately she began a flurry of questions.

"Even if you ask me that, all I can think to say is that I meant what I said..." As her gaze wandered a bit, Chloe then repeated the words that had caused her friend to freeze, "I'm getting married."

"Just when did that happen?!" Latina screamed, so loudly that it must have reached outside.

She had thought things were back to normal, but apparently the world had no intention of settling down.

Latina and Chloe had known each other for quite some time now. To Latina, Chloe was the first friend she had ever made.

Back when she lived in Vassilios, she hadn't had anyone she could call a friend. The only ones around were her parents, adults related to them, and chamberlains. She hadn't felt lonely, though, because her other half had always been around to play with her.

But then she was exiled from her home, torn away from her other half, and lost her parents. She had lost everything once, and so everything she had gained here in Kreuz since Dale picked her up was utterly irreplaceable to her.

And her best friend, who accepted her without any discrimination or condescension, even when she could only speak awkward Western Continental at best, was at the top of that list. It was Chloe who brought her into the group with the other children, and taught her how to play around and get into mischief. All of her happy childhood memories were shared with Chloe.

Chloe was also the one Latina had discussed her romance with.

Latina had feelings for Dale ever since she was young, and she felt no need to

hide that fact from her best friend. And besides, it was only natural for a maiden in love to want to boast about her sweetheart.

But with that said, it had only ever been one-sided, with Latina always being the one to talk.

Chloe hardly ever talked about romance, and all discussions on such matters never involved her.

And so, Latina was unable to hide her shock at her friend's sudden engagement.

"Huh? Did you get set up with someone or something?" Latina asked, voicing the first reason that came to mind for this sudden development.

"No... That's not it..." Chloe protested awkwardly.

She looked bashful, as if she was embarrassed. It would seem that she was fully aware how out of character it was for her to partake in this sort of romantic gossip.

"Then just who are you marrying, Chloe...?!"

There was a reason Latina was steadily growing more and more hasty.

Latina had cared for Dale ever since she was little, and ever since her feelings reached him and they were engaged, he had positively smothered her with affection. And both of her late parents had raised her, which was rare in Vassilios, plus they had a gentle, harmonious relationship. Then there were Kenneth and Rita, who got along so well as they ran the Ocelot, day in and day out.

In part due to that upbringing, Latina was a fairly strong proponent of love for love's sake.

So naturally, there was no way she wouldn't be interested in hearing more about this sudden development.

"No, well you see, Rudy's..."

"Rudy?"

"No, not Rudy!"

“Right. I figured there was no way he could be the one.”

That was a rather awful thing to say when he wasn't even around to defend himself.

“He's one of Rudy's colleagues...”

“Then... he's a guard?” Latina asked, tilting her head. There were quite a few members of the guards amongst the Ocelot's regulars. Latina thought them over as she recalled each and every one of their faces.

“No, not one of the customers from the Ocelot. He says a lot of the elites frequent that place, so it's hard for him to work up the nerve to go there.”

The regulars included the captain of the guard, as well as a number of highly skilled elites amongst the guards. And so, it would be no surprise for any normal member of the group to not feel up to visiting all that often. Though with that said, there was also no shortage of young folks who weighed that against the charm of the adorable waitress who worked there and ended up deciding to go in the end.

“I see...” Latina stated in understanding, then turned to face Chloe once again. “But still, just when did that happen? And also...” Latina started, then suddenly paused, a look of dejection on her face. “Why didn't you tell me...?”

She thought that she would be the first one to hear of her friend's romance. She had no basis for that, but they were best friends, so that was what she thought. But maybe she was the only one thinking that, and perhaps Chloe no longer considered her a best friend.

It was a bad habit of Latina's to immediately jump to pessimistic conclusions like that, but Chloe had been her best friend for years, so she was well aware of that.

And so, Chloe thrust out a plain and simple explanation.

“Now just who was it who went missing when I wanted to discuss this, I wonder...?”

“I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry...!”

She remembered all too clearly.

Dale and Latina had gotten engaged when she was still a little young for marriage by Labandese standards. But now, several years had passed, and she was old enough that it wouldn't be remotely strange for her to be married.

And Latina was well aware that she was at fault for not being by her best friend's side during that period.

"But still, just how did it happen?"

"...Well, at first I was to be set up with someone from a textile wholesaler who I knew through work... And we happened to see each other now and again, and he told me not to do it..." Chloe explained after looking at Latina with a teasing expression as the girl apologized in a fluster. But as she talked about her fiancé, her expression softened and she felt at ease inside.

Chloe and her fiancé had started to grow close because Latina had gone missing. Up until then, she didn't see him as a possible romantic partner, and he was just someone she saw now and again and made small talk with.

When Latina went missing and then Dale disappeared too, the regulars of the Dancing Ocelot started giving their all to look into what had happened.

Amongst them was their childhood friend Rudolph, who ran all around Kreuz and discovered the key clue that there existed a girl who looked identical to Latina, mainly via testimony from the gatekeepers.

Another of their friends, Sylvia, left not only Kreuz but all of Laband in search of Latina.

But Chloe was just an ordinary person living in town, and she wasn't able to do a thing.

She really hated herself, not being able to do anything for her precious best friend she had known since childhood. It was so very hard.

Thanks to the Demon Lords of Calamity the world was teetering on the brink, and the guards and adventurers were volunteering to maintain order at the risk of their lives.

And yet, there was nothing she could do. If only there was at least *some* way she could help.

As those thoughts ran through her head, her legs ended up taking her to the temple.

This temple for Ahmar, patron god of Laband, was where the night festival was held, and also where people came to pray for the safety of those who took up the sword to fight for their own sense of justice. Her friend's beloved had made a name for himself as a champion, so she prayed that he would be successful and they would come back safely.

She had also frequently visited the temple of Akhdar along with her friends, and was quite familiar with it. She prayed that her friend who was running all around would be safe. And above all else, she prayed to the god who watched over travellers for news of her best friend's whereabouts to arrive even a moment sooner.

She rarely ever visited the temples, but now she went to as many as she could and prayed, as if she depended on it.

The one to call out to her back then had been Patrick Hartmann. He was a young guard who had once seen her home after they'd all attended the Ahmar night festival together.

As a guard, it was Patrick's job to preserve public order around town. Because of that, it wasn't rare in the least for him to be out on patrol. And the two had grown close enough that when they ran into each other on such occasions, they would exchange greetings.

He had called out to Chloe because Kreuz had been growing less and less safe.

Thanks to the absolute vigilance of the guards and the leadership of the adventurers, Kreuz was foremost in terms of public order for Laband, but even so, it was hard to call it "safe" compared to how things were in times of peace. And so, it was plenty possible that a young woman walking around all on her own and looking helpless could end up getting wrapped up in some sort of trouble.

"Yeah... It's alright, I'll be fine."

If she were her usual determined self, that statement would have sounded persuasive even without anything to back it up. But at the time, there wasn't

even a hint of her usual unjustified level of confidence. The smile on her face seemed somehow empty and pitiful.

“If it’s just on your way home, then I’ll walk you back.”

“I told you, I’m fine...”

“I was in the middle of delivering orders to the unit in that part of town, anyway,” Patrick said with a smile, taking care not to directly argue with her claim.

Thinking back on it, Chloe figured that was when her perception of him started to shift, bit by bit.

It was also Patrick’s advice that lead to the creation of a symbol for the adventurers and those with similar feelings to fixate on.

“If you’ve never done it before, then you can just bring it up with someone capable of such things. After all, people who can gather everyone together are important, too. Of course, it would be nice if you counted me among your connections, too...”

When they met in the Backstreet Bakery while he was buying a mountain of snacks for his squad and she was grabbing lunch, he mentioned that to her and provided her with a task to handle.

She had been nothing but depressed, but now there was something she could contribute with, too. That made her happier than anything else.

Chloe drew the rough design work herself, but since she wasn’t a specialist, it was ultimately a bit shabby-looking. As someone who had worked for a long time in the clothing industry, she couldn’t bring herself to present such amateurish work to the world.

It was then that Patrick got involved, and she received advice from an expert who had regular dealings with the guards. This expert in crests and the like adjusted the Fairy Princess design, providing an additional level of polish.

As for the connections needed to actually construct the flag, Chloe herself already had them. As a tailor, she had ties to both workshops that specialized in delicate dying, as well as those well known for their complex, yet sturdy,

weaves.

After creating a prototype, she talked to the adventurers of the Ocelot and established a budget. She ended up with far more money and orders than she'd expected, and she couldn't possibly sew all the flags on her own, so it turned into a big job spanning numerous workshops.

A darkness had fallen over Kreuz's crafting district, but this special order invigorated the fabric workshops. It was a job which would earn them the gratitude of a great many people, and it also really felt like something worth doing.

When Chloe raised the finished Fairy Princess flag high, Patrick was by her side.

As she raised the flag as if to say, "We're here looking for you, so hurry up and realize that!" Chloe looked up at the flag and felt a swell of powerful emotions within her.

In the same manner, the distance between her and Patrick gradually shrank over time. Before she knew it, the youth who was once a mere acquaintance had become something far more than that.

That was why Chloe had been unable to bring herself to talk in detail with Latina about Patrick. After all, doing so meant telling her friend the details about how helpless she felt back then, and how difficult it was.

She had already told Latina what she needed to, so she had no intention of tediously dragging things out. After all, everything was over and done with. Chloe was a decisive person, so she got angry, was apologized to, and accepted that. She was entirely satisfied with that.

Really, she was just pleased to have her friend back.

Besides, above all else, it was just too awkward. She felt embarrassed, in other words.

Because she was talking to someone who had known her since childhood, the idea of revealing such uncharacteristically girlish feelings was so embarrassing she felt like she would faint.

And so, Chloe had reported the matter to her friend, hiding her true feelings behind a joke.

Chloe couldn't help but feel relieved, seeing how Latina didn't seem to notice the agony she was feeling inside.

"You're getting married..."

"Will you attend the ceremony?"

"Of course. But still... I thought that I was going to be first..." she muttered, a bit dumbfounded somehow, but then she shot her best friend a smile. "It feels strange somehow, me telling you 'I wish you happiness'..."

"Well, I wouldn't exactly decide on something like this with the intention of becoming unhappy."

"It's just an odd feeling, like somebody's stealing you away."

"Considering how you go on and on about your own romance, I don't want to hear that from you..."

They both broke out laughing in tandem, realizing just how true that was.

"What sort of person is your fiance?"

"You may have met him once before."

"Really?"

Seeing Latina tilt her head in thought, as nobody was coming to mind, Chloe laughed in amusement.

Meanwhile, around that time...

"Chloe and I are going to get married," Patrick suddenly informed Rudolph when the two were on break, only for the latter to spit out the cold water he had been drinking in surprise.

"Gross..." Patrick said, furrowing his brows.

"You... Huh? Are you serious?" Rudolph asked with a grimace.

He had overheard for a while now that his colleague was getting closer to his childhood friend, but to be honest, he thought it had just been crazy talk.

Thanks to the strange pecking order that he'd been conditioned to see things with as a child, he frankly couldn't even imagine someone having romantic feelings towards her.

"You know, some folks say marriage is where a life goes to die..."

"I'll tell Chloe that's how you congratulated us," Patrick responded with a refreshing smile.

"Sorry. Like, seriously. Please forgive me..."

The way he immediately crumbled and started apologizing showed just what sort of relationship Rudolph had with his childhood friend.

And he seemed to have a fine relationship with his colleague, too.

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Though it was a wedding, it wasn't as if commoners could afford such luxury as wedding dresses. The ability to order an impractical outfit of the sort that you would only wear once in a lifetime was limited solely to nobles and the rich.

For common folk, they simply wore the best clothes they owned, and then a ceremony was held at the temple of Quirmizi, the god who governed not only the earth and harvest, but also marriage. Kreuz was rather strict when it came to public records, too, so it was also customary to present documentation to the lord's manor at the same time.

Once you received the god's blessing and finished the proper procedures at the manor, you announced the matter more publicly. Normally, folks did that by holding a banquet and inviting people from their neighborhood. The custom had the additional benefit of introducing the couple to their neighbors, to help make their future relations easier.

As a commoner, Chloe of course had no plans of ordering a wedding dress and holding an elaborate banquet. However, she did work as a tailor. And her pride as a craftswoman wouldn't allow her to take this once in a lifetime event with only halfhearted ambition.

Accordingly, Chloe decided to prepare a new outfit from scratch.

"You guards already have uniforms, so fortunately that means I only need to

prepare one for myself, which is a big help.”

Fittingly, though, she still kept a strict budget. After a great deal of deliberation, she decided on a fabric that compromised on neither price nor weave from amongst a great number of samples. And the fact that the dying process went just as she had planned was exceptionally encouraging.

As she sat beside her friend who was hurriedly moving along her needle, Latina looked at the design sheet and the incomplete outfit and tilted her head.

“I think that some sort of large accessory would look nice here...”

“It just wasn’t in the budget.”

“Right... And it would be too expensive for me to give it to you as a gift, to congratulate you...”

“Yeah, if you went that far, I’d probably end up getting mad.”

While looking at her friend, who had reacted just as expected with her commoner’s money sense, Latina wagged her index finger back and forth looking troubled.

“But you know, you could still borrow one. I’ll get permission, so how about it?”

“I can’t say I’m not interested, but... I mean, I’d be terrified of something happening to it...”

“I can keep an eye on it in the meantime.”

That proposal had Chloe seriously excited.

Naturally, she had an interest in the sort of expensive jewelry that would normally be out of her grasp with her financial standing. Plus there was the fact that Latina was assuredly thinking of borrowing something from Dale’s home village of Tislow.

Chrysos, who had been staying in Kreuz until just a few days ago, ruled over the nation of Vassilios, which was blessed with all sorts of abundant ores underneath the ground. And Tislow was a foremost producer of magical devices, which used such materials. Plus there was that tough old Granny Wendelgard and her son Randolph. A plan to combine the resources of that

neighboring country with Dale's own personal connections was only natural.

Jewelry-styled decorative magical devices that served as exemplars of Tislow's specialty were delivered to Kreuz using a special postal service. Countless such goods had been sent to present Chrysos as examples, and to be gifted to her depending on the circumstances.

By the way, Chrysos had a very strong interest in the chic goods produced with Tislow's techniques for processing jewels. She seemed very interested in taking some home with her, in the hopes of cultivating such an industry in her own country.

However, Tislow was Dale's home village. That was the one point of which Chrysos disapproved. If she accepted such expensive gifts, then it would be like a favor owed to Dale, which she found deeply unpleasant.

Dale succeeded in convincing Chrysos to accept them, though, by pointing out that Latina had the same sort of jewelry. Apparently her desire to match readily surpassed her dislike of Dale.

The jewelry that hadn't been presented to Chrysos was currently still in Kreuz.

With that said, it would be far too careless to just casually leave them sitting around in the attic of the Ocelot. And so instead they were being stored at the bank in the Azraq temple, but Latina figured she could get permission if she wrote a letter to Granny Wen in Tislow explaining her circumstances.

Granny Wen doted on Latina just like Dale did, but at the same time, she trusted Latina enough to know such requests would not be made lightly. And though Latina could get immediate permission if she sought it from Dale rather than Granny Wen, she was honest enough not to try something like that.

"What color gem would be good...? Maybe something similar to that of your outfit...?"

"Are we really going to be able to choose all that?"

"Well, there aren't a ton, but they were intended as samples to begin with, so there's a pretty diverse selection."

"Then what about an opposing color? I mean, if I'm getting the chance, that

would stand out more...”

“Would it be better to have a simple design, or one with lots of ornamentation?”

They passed the time engrossed in their discussion, the outfit in progress laid out before them.

Latina was enraptured by the outfit her best friend had selected for her big day, but that was only natural. She was, after all, a girl of the age to be interested in fashion.

The question of what she would wear to the wedding was of utmost importance, too.

“Hmm...”

Latina was digging through her box of clothing in the Ocelot’s attic. She had grabbed her best outfits and was laying them out.

“It would be good to have a different color from Chloe... This one’s cute and I really like it, but it’s not the right season...”

“If you’re worrying that much about it, are you going out somewhere?” Dale asked, tilting his head as he looked at Latina. He wasn’t planning to go out, so he honestly had no idea what she was so worried about.

“Um, Chloe’s getting married.”

“Is that so?”

Dale was acquainted with Latina’s best friend, as she occasionally came to visit at the Ocelot.

“And so, I was wondering what I should wear...”

“You’d look cute in anything, Latina.”

Dale’s attention was, of course, entirely lavished on Latina rather than what she was doing.

“What should I do with my hair...? Should I buy a new accessory...?”

Latina brought one hand up to her head, and was lost in thought.

Ribbons were just too childish. Considering her hair color, silver accessories may bring things together nicely. No wait, maybe she should splurge a bit on gold, to have something truly brilliant. Her thoughts just kept on racing through her head.

“Should I buy you something?” Dale asked, but Latina just said, “No,” with a bit of a troubled frown.

“I get the feeling that you would go overboard and buy me something more suited for an evening party, Dale...”

“Wouldn’t you rather have something high quality than something cheap?”

“I wouldn’t really wear it often enough to get something like that...”

Dale tilted his head. He had a very selective sense of aesthetics, due to being raised in a town foremost among jewelry producers in Laband, and his perception of value was also completely apart from that of a common man. Plus his “normal” encounters with such jewelry involved high society and nobility, which left him a bit biased.

With her commoner’s mindset, Latina certainly wouldn’t be able to bring herself to regularly wear the sort of accessory Dale would select, and in fact would end up immediately storing it in the bank at the temple of Azraq.

She could tell that much from how splendid the bracelet he had given her for their engagement was.

“Still, that girl’s getting married, huh...?”

He may have had a fiancée the same age in the form of Latina, but it still blindsided him to hear such news about a girl he had known since she was a child.

“Should I... perform the ceremony?” Dale asked, wanting to offer his blessing.

“Wah?” Latina reacted, looking clearly confused with a complex expression on her face. “Dale? But why?”

“Why...? I mean, the wedding will be at the temple of Quirmizi, right?”

“That’s right.”

“So for a normal citizen’s ceremony, they’ll just assign a regular priest, yeah?”

“Isn’t that plenty, though?”

“Well yeah, I guess. But... I’m considered a high ranking priest. So wouldn’t having me do it make things more auspicious?”

“Wha?” she let slip again, which was a habit when she didn’t understand something. It was like a question mark for her, and just happened reflexively.

While hesitating a bit due to her reaction, Dale went ahead and explained his skills.

“I have divine protection from Azraq too, but... My divine protection from Quirmizi is of a high enough rank to perform religious ceremonies, and I’ve had training as a priest.”

A special trait of those known as heroes was that they possessed divine protection from multiple gods. On top of that, Dale’s home village of Tislow was considered a holy ground of Quirmizi’s, having received great favor from that god.

There were a number of aspects to his status as a hero that Dale wasn’t fond of, so he didn’t spread it around that he possessed such divine protection. But on the other hand, the title of “hero” ultimately belonged to an ability, not a job. And so officially, Dale’s occupation was that of a high ranking Quirmizi priest.

That was why Dale had brought up the idea, but Latina still looked troubled.

“It’s like I can’t even imagine how many things you can do, Dale...”

It was a rather strange feeling, being told that by a prodigy like Latina.

“Hmm... I’ll ask Chloe next time I see her.”

“I see.”

Dale seemed to have already lost interest in the wedding itself, and was now looking over the outfits Latina had spread out. Being his usual self, he was thinking that if he only had a bit more notice, he could have put in an order with a tailor for her.

And since Latina knew precisely how Dale was, she'd intentionally waited this long to begin preparing. As someone who enjoyed cleaning up and keeping things tidy, Latina didn't wish to end up with more outfits than she needed.

The following day, Latina mentioned Dale's proposal to Chloe.

In one hand, she held a bundle from a confectioner she had discovered just the other day near the high class residences of the western district. She had found it back when her sister was visiting and she was frequently visiting the western district. Normally she wouldn't purchase anything from such an upper-class establishment, but they sold such brilliantly decorated sweets that would be just perfect for the celebratory banquet for the wedding.

Chloe certainly looked surprised to see Latina show up with such an expensive-looking bundle, but when she heard the surprisingly reasonable cost, she was an entirely different manner of shocked.

When she set the plate of baked goods with their flower-shaped cream decorations down, it was like the table had been adorned with a bouquet of flowers.

Feeling like it would be a shame to see that beauty crumble, she shoved one into her mouth whole, puffing her cheeks up. It was even fluffier and more delicious than she had imagined.

"Ah, it's delicious."

"They must use the sort of butter that only high-class shops have..."

They also drank tea while chewing away.

Latina couldn't help but smile when she saw her best friend's outfit, which was now rather far along.

"You'll be done soon, won't you?"

"I suppose."

"Um, Chloe, about Dale..."

Latina then explained Dale's proposal to Chloe, only for an extremely doubtful look to cross her friend's face.

“Hey, Latina...”

“Hmm?”

“What would you do if you were in my place?”

“Yeah...”

“I want to have a modest wedding fitting to my status as a commoner.”

“Right.”

“If a world-famous big shot hero showed up, and then performed the ceremony... Just how do you think it would turn out?”

“I don’t think I’d want him to do it,” Latina immediately replied.

He had been her fiance, and before that her guardian for many years, but still, considering her commoner mindset that reaction was quite natural.

“That’s how it is.”

“I see.”

Becoming too famous was a problem in its own way.

“I think it’s best to just do things normally,” Chloe said with a nod, a pretty typical attitude.

“Um, is it alright if I attend along with Dale?”

“Well, he is your fiance, so I have no reason to refuse, but... I’d certainly appreciate it if you could get him to restrain himself.”

“Yeah...”

In that way, Dale’s proposal ended up getting turned down.

The two didn’t bring up how much anxiety the priest who had to perform the ceremony in front of him would face. After all, Dale’s face and status were well known amongst Quirmizi priests. It would only become obvious on the day of that the priest in charge was even more nervous than the bride and groom, having to perform while being observed by a champion who was also a higher ranking priest than he was.

Let us pray for him.

A day in which it was a little cloudy, but not altogether bad weather... That was the sort of day on which Chloe's wedding was held.

The wedding ceremonies in Kreuz were a little different than the one Latina had once attended in Tislow. As a priest, Dale had taught her that.

"This is the norm for Laband as a whole. I think it's the same in different countries too, but it really does vary by region. But still, Tislow really is unique."

"I see."

Dale gave that simple lecture while walking alongside Latina, dressed in his usual outdoor attire. It wasn't the sort of formal outfit he needed to wear when making an appearance in high society. Dale had gotten used to being called "deplorable," but even so, he knew that if he dressed too nicely, it would make him stand out a bit too much.

"It wasn't a mistake to attend, was it? It's Chloe's wedding, but it would be a problem if we screwed it up..."

"You shouldn't worry so much about it. What matters most is your desire to celebrate their union."

Latina had a worried look on her face, and was clad in a bright green dress. She had ultimately decided on that cute favorite of hers after all of her worrying about the matter. Part of her reasoning was that she wanted to wear something different from Chloe, who was today's big star.

As far as accessories went, she just had on a golden hairpin and her engagement bracelet from Dale. Even so, that was enough to make her cuteness seriously stand out. Her greatest accessory of all, though, was the gentle smile that crept across her face when she prayed for her precious best friend's happiness.

A certain faithful pup stood by Latina's side, his tail wagging.

It was Chloe's big day, so Vint's usual poncho was brand new. Of course, it had been handmade by Latina.

"You're always adorable, but it really is something special when you're all dressed up, Latina. You'll end up standing out even more than the bride!" Dale

exclaimed, his usual sort of deplorable nonsense. He had said something similar back when his younger brother was getting married, which really called into question his “unshakeable” restraint.

“You said something like that before, but still... That sort of stuff’s really not okay, at least not for today.”

Because she strongly felt that the star of today needed to be her friend, Latina actually firmly shot Dale down for once. She even gave Dale a stern look while making an x with her two index fingers.

Still, though it was the norm, even if Latina tried to intimidate someone, the other person would completely fail to feel threatened. She was just far too much like a small animal.

“Woof,” Vint let slip rather listlessly. It was hard to judge under the circumstances if that was him agreeing with Latina, or him regretting how soft she was.

They were walking the same path towards the crafting district that she had traveled many times since she was a child.

She had made countless visits to her friend’s house over a long stretch of time. She had so many memories there it was hard to recall them all, from frivolous conversations to youthful discussions about love.

Chloe was going to move into a new home with her husband, so starting tomorrow, she wouldn’t live here anymore. Latina would no longer be paying the place frequent visits like she used to.

When she realized how much her everyday life would be changing, Latina’s eyes started to grow damp. But she just shook her head gently and drove the thought from her mind. If she were to start crying before the wedding even started, Chloe wouldn’t just be astounded, she would full on scold Latina. Latina somehow managed to get her thoughts back in order, with the image of her friend’s angry face in the back of her mind.

After being welcomed by Chloe’s parents (who were in even more formal attire than usual), Latina headed on inside.

There she was greeted by Chloe in her now complete outfit. Her friend was

just the same as usual, not betraying a hint of nervousness.

“Welcome.”

“Yeah.”

Chloe’s clothing had a simple and refined look, lacking any frills or anything of the sort, making for what was perhaps an overly stylish wedding outfit. But still, it suited Chloe well. At first glance it appeared to be a simple unornamented dress, but when she moved a second skirt came into view, with a large red floral pattern on it. It had turned out to be a rather exquisite design, overall.

Latina held out a box containing a piece of jewelry, offering it to her friend.

“Here, it’s the brooch I promised.”

“Thanks.”

Chloe nonchalantly accepted the box and opened it, only to freeze in place. You could almost hear the *creeeeek* as she slowly turned to face Latina.

“Gah... Latina... I really can’t help but be scared of this getting stolen or something...”

Inside the box was a beautiful brooch, made up of a large ruby surrounded by elaborate golden ornamentation. The shining jewel alone would be so expensive that a commoner could normally never possibly lay hands on it. It made sense, though, seeing as it was meant to be a sample presented to the ruler of a nation. And there was no way Tislow wouldn’t go all out, considering the circumstances.

“About that, I thought up a bit of a good luck charm.”

Chloe’s timidness was only natural, but even so, Latina plucked a single one of her own hairs.

“It may not be all that pleasant, but here, I’ll entwine my hair like this.”

As she said that, Latina wrapped her plucked hair around the metal fittings on the back of the brooch. Her hair was so lightly colored that you would likely never notice it if you didn’t know it was there, at least when it was just the one strand.

“Right. And?”

“If I do this, he says he’ll be able to find it as long as it’s in Kreuz, at least for the next few days.”

A silence fell over the room.

Latina’s statement caused an awkward expression to flash over not just Chloe’s face, but Dale’s as well.

Apparently Latina was having the pup accompany her even to her friend’s wedding in order to guard, and if necessary track down, the expensive brooch. On the off chance someone was struck by a sudden urge to steal it, they would quickly be faced by a mythical beast’s hunting skills.

Vint was ready and raring to go with a triumphant look on his face as his tail wagged happily along. After all, it was only natural for this loyal hound to get fired up when Latina made a personal request to him. There really was no guarantee in the least that any potential thieves would be able to walk away unharmed.

“Well, it’s an auspicious occasion, so I can’t imagine anyone like that showing up anyway...”

“Yeah, that’s true.”

“Right. I don’t think you need to worry about it.”

While Chloe and Dale had more or less turned away from the reality of the situation, Latina wore a carefree smile on her face.

Neither Chloe nor Dale knew that Latina had thought her pup was just there in case it was misplaced. She hadn’t even considered the possibility of a thief.

Having regained her composure, Chloe affixed the borrowed brooch to her chest.

In an instant, her simple outfit suddenly became quite brilliant. Naturally the crimson gemstone played the main role there, but the tasteful outfit as a whole also served perfectly to help it stand out so well.

“Wah... You look amazing,” Latina immediately uttered, and Chloe was far from dissatisfied, herself.

She could set aside any manner of reservations for the chance to wear such a brilliant ruby, and honestly, she was overjoyed.

“It really is impressive.”

“Yeah. It really suits you, Chloe.”

It had always been hard to deal with the way she could say such things with an innocent smile, even when they were children.

Unable to handle such sudden praise from her friend, Chloe averted her gaze. Latina just tilted her head in confusion, but Dale noticed Chloe’s ears clearly turning red.

“Chloe?”

“You don’t really have time to be wasting right now, do you?” Dale interjected, extending a helping hand.

“That’s true!”

When Chloe suddenly stood up there was still some red to her cheeks, but Latina didn’t seem to notice. Dale, meanwhile, managed to stifle an awkward smile.

With that, they headed for the temple of Quirmizi, accompanied by Chloe’s family.

It was a commoner wedding, so it wasn’t exactly some splendid, complex ceremony. In fact, it was the bare minimum of a ritual, held before the altar. For that reason, it was the norm for the bride, groom, and attendees to simply gather at the temple of Quirmizi on their own.

Chloe’s wedding was no exception, and they chatted away casually on the way to the temple in the central district. The groom and his family were already waiting there. After a brief greeting, the group crowded into the temple.

As one would expect, Latina was looking curiously around the inside of the temple, which she wasn’t very familiar with. Fitting to being part of a temple to the god of the earth, the large space being used as a waiting room was decorated here and there throughout with reliefs of flowers and harvests. The wooden chairs lined up there had been polished until they were an amber

color, with the wood grain showing beautifully. And the marble flooring somehow felt similar to the style used in Vassilios, which evoked a strange feeling in her.

The temple of Quirmizi had a rather relaxed atmosphere compared to those of other gods, so they didn't question the pup accompanying the group. And perhaps because Latina had made sure to explain things properly in advance, Vint was behaving far more like an obedient hound than he normally would, simply standing by the Fairy Princess's side and wagging his tail.

Dale was particularly surprised to see Vint like that, realizing that the pup really could get his act together if he tried.

The bride, groom, and their families headed further into the temple to offer donations.

Not long afterwards, the guests were lead into the room of worship by a priest. It was a wide-open space, filled with dazzling light.

The blue sky was clearly visible through the massive windows in the room. The bottom halves of the windows were stained glass, and the brilliant floral designs cast colorful shadows across the room as light passed through them.

The chairs had a rustic, simple feel, but when the shining light from the stained glass fell upon them, it created an otherworldly sort of space.

There was a stained glass window behind the altar, too. It had a harvest design on it, and the brilliant glass colored in the orange of the god almost seemed to give off light of its own to illuminate the room.

"Wah..." Latina let slip, seemingly unintentionally.

This was a room of worship meant for weddings, so she would normally never see it. This room meant for special occasions possessed a different sort of beauty than the noble manors and the imperial palace that she saw in the capital, a gentle one extolling the temple's god. It really was no surprise that Latina ended up feeling such admiration.

Latina turned to look at Dale by her side, and then tilted her head a bit.

"Dale, you've got a sort of serious look on your face."

“I guess you could call it an occupational disease...? I just get nervous when everything seems to be going as planned, I guess...”

“It’s not like I don’t understand, but please don’t go saying anything that will cause trouble, alright?”

The two whispered as they talked. Each of them held a single flower in their hand.

Each of the attendees present had one, and they were meant to be presented before Quirmizi. Just like in Tislow, in the Quirmizi temples across Laband, flowers were considered crucial for religious ceremonies. That meant there were many nearby florists contracted with it, in addition to business from passing flower merchants.

The families of the bride and groom were already seated in the front row, waiting for the ceremony to begin.

Before long, the doors to the room opened, and two priests came into view. They each gave a deep bow to the attendees, and then the guests started quietly whispering amongst themselves.

The priests then opened the doors wide. The first to enter the room of worship was a lone third priest dressed in formal attire. He had decorative orange cloth over both shoulders, which displayed rather abstract flower and harvest designs. The priest headed straight for the altar, then turned so that he was facing the attendees with his back to the window.

It was then that the bride and groom appeared, as if they had been awaiting that signal.

“Waaah...” Latina let slip, overcome with emotion at the sight of her best friend wearing the sort of gorgeous headdress considered the symbol of a bride. It was made using silk blessed by the temple, serving as a sort of protective amulet. Such headdresses, made of numerous trailing layers of silk and gorgeously decorated with flowers, were only ever prepared for weddings. The flowers were the orange of Quirmizi, and the headdress went perfectly with her dark hair and subdued outfit. It was impossible to see her as anything but a bride.



“She’s really getting married...”

The reality of the event hit Latina hard. She had been trying desperately to ignore it, but her ability to hold her tears back seemed at its limit, as her vision was starting to grow blurry.

When Chloe noticed her friend, she gave a strained smile that was very much like her.

“Why are you crying, Latina?”

“I don’t know... But I wish you happiness, Chloe.”

As she gave her blessing, Latina held out the single flower she had been holding close to her chest.

“...Right.”

Patrick was the one to accept it, but he turned and handed it to Chloe.

With a formal smile on his face, Dale also handed the groom a flower.

As they approached the priest waiting at the altar, the number of flowers held by the bride and groom continued to grow. Those bundles of flowers were then to be offered up to Quirmizi, as proof of how much the couple had been blessed by those around them.

The priest began a prayer. It was in neither Western Continental nor the language of spells, so only priests could understand what was being said. Still, the grace carried by the words was lost on none present. The guests naturally sat up straight, and their hearts were filled with thanks towards the god and prayers that the couple would be blessed in their new life together.

As the ceremony reached its climax, Latina was overcome with emotion and tears finally burst down her face.

Dale held her hand tightly as he recited the incredibly familiar prayer from memory.

By the time the ceremony was over, the handkerchief Latina had been holding was completely drenched.

There was no way that Latina could possibly hide how much she had been

crying, so when Chloe saw her best friend like that, she gave a rather awkward smile.

“Seriously, why did you cry like that, Latina?”

“I don’t know... I’m not sure, I just kind of ended up crying...”

“Well, I guess that’s just like you.”

“I wanted Sylvia to see it too...”

When Latina mentioned the name of their other friend in Vassilios, Chloe broke out in a slight awkward smile.

“Sylvia... Well, what matters most is that she seems to be enjoying her work more than anyone, right?”

“That may be so, but still...”

It had been Sylvia’s dream since they were children to visit that unknown neighboring country, and now she was over there greedily gathering up all sorts of information about its climate and culture and the like. Latina may have been born there, but having been raised in secret in the depths of the shrine she didn’t even know basic Vassilios customs, so it was only a matter of time before her friend knew more about the nation than she did.

At some point, a travelogue of her home country was sure to be published stamped with her friend’s name. And honestly, Latina found that thought exhilarating.

“And besides, when it comes to Sylvia... I honestly wouldn’t be all that surprised if she came back from Vassilios with a kid...”

Latina just gave an awkward smile in response to Chloe’s statement.

It really wouldn’t be strange in the last for Sylvia to go and do something that completely subverted their expectations.

“Now then, now it’s your turn next, Latina.”

“...Yeah.”

Latina gave a bit of an embarrassed smile, then glanced over at Dale.

Dale was a step removed and talking to the Quirmizi priests, so as not to

interfere with the conversation between the two best friends. He was famous and was considered a high ranking priest even if that wasn't how he made a living, so it was no surprise that these priests would want to talk to him. And considering his own position, Dale couldn't exactly turn them away.

After Latina finished checking how Dale was doing, the pair resumed their conversation.

"Unlike me, you've got budget to spare, Latina, so... How about ordering the sort of dress that's popular with nobles nowadays?" Chloe said, now fully exposing her craftswoman side.

Dale's ample finances were clear to see just from the engagement bracelet Latina always had on her person, and there were also plenty of big-shots waiting in the wings to act as sponsors.

It was no surprise that a craftswoman would be incredibly excited about the opportunity to create an elaborate dress using materials and accessories of the sort that a local tailor would normally have no access to.

"Normally I'd never have a chance to make something like that, so please let me do it. Scrutinizing what sort of design would be best and gathering materials and all that will be fun, too."

"Wah...?"

Latina was honestly perplexed, seeing her friend get so wrapped up in her work and start rushing ahead. Naturally, that meant she let that familiar sound slip and tilted her head a bit.

"I think... If I'm having a wedding ceremony, it'll be in Dale's home village."

Dale's home village of Tislow had a unique culture all its own. And Latina knew full well that Dale took great pride in being one of them.

And so, ever since Dale proposed, Latina had assumed it was only obvious that their wedding would be held in Tislow.

"It's sad that you won't be there to see it, but I know the traditions of his home village are very important to Dale... Plus the wedding won't just be for me and Dale, but also for welcoming me into his family."

Chloe was silent.

“I think a dress would be lovely too, but the wedding outfits in Dale’s home village are passed down from generation to generation... And I think that’s wonderful in its own way.”

Chloe made a complex face at her friend’s response, but Latina didn’t notice.

Latina also wasn’t aware of the fact that her friend had connections with a certain massive nonprofit organization through the Ocelot’s regulars. As Chloe was the one who had created the Fairy Princess banner, she had deep ties with them.

But above all else, Latina was simply unaware of the huge influence that she held.

The wedding ceremony would be held in Tislow.

That news would hit the large group of people in Kreuz who had been looking forward to the once in a lifetime chance to see the Fairy Princess as a bride just as hard as a death sentence.

But with that said, Chloe didn’t realize the information she had obtained was quite that important.

Ultimately, the one to leak that information was her brand new husband, Patrick.

Chloe was aware that since Latina had lost her birth family at a young age, her new family and place in life were incredibly important to her. And so, she didn’t want to deny all that by objecting to her friend’s plan.

Still, she couldn’t help feeling unsatisfied, since at some point she had convinced herself that she would be the one to create Latina’s wedding dress. And as a result, Chloe ended up grumbling about her friend’s decision to Patrick.

In turn, Patrick discussed the matter with a certain coworker who was his age.

That coworker happened to be childhood friends with his new wife and her best friend. It had just been raised as a bit of light teasing gossip, because it was well known amongst the guards that Patrick’s colleague had feelings for the

best friend of his new wife.

Rudolph's reaction when he heard that news differed from what Patrick had expected.

Rather than blushing or getting mad, he went completely pale.

In his head, Rudolph was predicting that this news could lead to ever worse riots in Kreuz than when the Demon Lords of Calamity were on the move.

Having correctly assessed the seriousness of the matter, Rudolph hurriedly reported the information to his superior.

What came next was truly instantaneous.

A certain organization forged in times of war took action with similar haste to if this had been a national emergency.

As a result, a notice was delivered to the Dancing Ocelot stating that Latina had been kidnapped by a group calling itself the Platinum Fairy Princess Protection Committee.

3: Sequel: The Platinum Hero vs. the Fairy Princess's Bodyguards

It was a short letter, written with great craftiness and excessively fine stationery.

The emotion drained from Dale's face the moment that he read it.

That was only for an instant though, and Dale turned to Kenneth (who had handed him the paper) with his usual strained smile. Then, he flung that elegantly written letter down atop the counter.

"Those old-timers sure do have free time on their hands... Now they've gone and played a prank like this, huh?"

Dale had been acquainted with the shop's regulars for quite some time now. And having known them for so long, he decided this was just a joke and there was no point in getting angry.

He was also aware that they prized Latina above all else. Just like him, they had watched over her since she was young and valued her happiness more than anything. And so, he could firmly state that no matter what sort of prank this may be, Latina herself wouldn't be in any danger.

Plus, since he was dealing with those old-timers, Dale didn't want to be criticized by Latina as being some immature, petty man.

"Well, I'm sure it's just a practical joke," Kenneth replied, not seeming the least bit concerned.

Kenneth had received the letter announcing Latina's kidnapping directly from regulars he was well acquainted with. Once the culprits had announced themselves clearly, it couldn't be seen as anything but a prank.

On top of that, the regulars who admitted to the crime had also added, "We'll be sure to escort the little lady back in time for her night shift." If the kidnappers were politely acknowledging her work schedule, it was hard to feel

any sense of urgency about the situation.

“Latina’s aware that they dote on her, too... So even if they came to her with their cards laid on the table, she probably couldn’t turn them down, right?”

“Well, to Latina, those old-timers are almost like relatives...”

Latina had no strong bonds with her blood relatives, so even if they weren’t actually related, those old-timers who spent each day watching over her since her childhood were special to her.

Considering that relationship, Latina must have gone along with their request.

They would talk things over with one another properly... That was the promise that Dale and Latina had made.

He couldn’t imagine that Latina would break that promise lightly. Right now Latina was surely at a complete and utter loss, being stuck between Dale and the regulars.

“Well... It shouldn’t be too hard to search for her, and then I’ll just slug the ringleader once or twice...” Dale said in a joking tone, giving his arm a warmup spin.

It was precisely then, with such perfect timing that both Dale and Kenneth couldn’t help but question if it had been planned, that a single youth strolled into the Ocelot.

“Pardon me.”

Despite looking a bit hesitant when faced by such glares from Dale and Kenneth, the youth pulled a sealed letter out of his moss green shoulder bag.

“I have a delivery for Sir Dale Reki.”

The insignia of a letter with wings on his shoulder bag denoted that he was a carrier for the largest postal delivery service around.

“Um... I’m Dale Reki.”

“Right, then could I have you sign here?”

The young postal carrier held out a receipt after handing over the letter. The receipt was affixed to a board, and he offered a pen that was uniquely designed

so you could carry it around, all so that a delivery could be made anywhere. All of those elements just served as further proof of the young man's occupation.

Dale signed the receipt, and with that the youth departed with a businesslike smile.

With that, both Dale and Kenneth's gazes naturally fell upon the sealed letter.

"Where is it from...?"

"Huh? This wax seal is..."

There was a single insignia pressed into the wax sealing the letter. The design looked simple at first glance, but actually incorporated a number of fine details, making it exceedingly difficult to forge. Dale was well aware of that fact.

With that, the person who could use this insignia soon came to mind and Dale's expression naturally grew stiff.

"That old hag is wrapped up in this, too...?!"

Amongst the people of his home village, only the clan leader was permitted to use that insignia.

And from what Dale knew, that person was exceptionally fond of pranks.

"No, it might just be a coincidence, right?" Kenneth commented uncertainly.

Kenneth had been acquainted with Dale's grandmother Wendelgard back when he was still an active adventurer. She saw something in him and entrusted him with Dale, and in the process, Kenneth didn't simply witness her talent and propensity for messing around, he'd had it positively seared into his mind.

With neither of them able to wipe away their doubt and Kenneth's gaze wandering, Dale went ahead and opened the letter. Despite his sharp tongue, he was actually quite careful when opening the envelope. He took out the contents, gave it a glance over, and then thoroughly furrowed his brows.

"What is it?"

"It says to hurry up and get myself over there... And she hints at the debt I owe them from back then..." Dale muttered, an unpleasant expression on his

face.

His family had lent him quite a bit of aid while he was running about the world looking for the demon lords. And because he knew just how important their help had been, Dale could hardly refuse her demands.

Normally, it would take him nearly a month to return home, and he would also need the duke's permission. And so, it certainly wasn't something that could just be done on a whim. But Dale had long since become a being unbound by the limits of common sense and could make it back there in a few days, a fact both his grandmother and father were well aware of. He figured that was why she had made the request so lightly.

At the same time, Dale wasn't able to tell the duke the reason behind him taking such abnormal actions. So in that case, it was simplest to just handle the matter in secret.

"Ugh..."

Above all else, though, Dale was unable to ignore his grandmother's letter because of the reason she wanted him to return.

"Apparently she wants me to visit for a bit to confirm some things for the wedding."

"Well, that's a good thing. Is it alright for Latina not to go?"

"Both the ceremony and the preparations will be at my family home. Latina can just get the details when the time comes, and besides, I can't exactly have her make a sudden climb over the mountains like that..."

"That doesn't just go for Latina. Even experienced adventurers wouldn't want to do that. Heck, I wouldn't want to do it."

"Yeah."

There was a rugged mountain range that stretched between Kreuz and Tislow. There wasn't even anything that could be called a proper animal trail there, nor anywhere to get a decent bit of rest. That was the sort of intense path he was being asked to tread. No matter how hardy the devil race may have been, there was no chance of him asking Latina to make such a journey.

And on the Tislow side of things, their eldest son had finally found himself a bride, so there was no way they would force her to push herself like that.

They thought nothing of it when it came to Dale, though. That much was quite clear.

“If the wedding ends up getting delayed, then that’s just what happens... And besides, I know she wanted to have it in a season with nice weather...”

There had been a late snowfall when Chrysos was staying in Kreuz, but it was already heading into early spring, the season when lots of folks started traveling to the capital and whatnot. If they continued to delay it, though, the time of year when it was nice out would pass them by in no time. His home village was in a region that got a lot of snow, after all.

“There’s no helping it, so I’ll have to end this farce as soon as possible and then have a word with Latina...”

“How about just going?” Kenneth asked, as a neutral party who could understand the feelings of both sides. He knew what was going through Dale’s head, but he could also see the sentiments of those responsible for this commotion, plain as day.

“I’ll talk things through with Latina. So why don’t you get away from here for a bit and give those fools a chance to cool their heads?”

Dale didn’t say a word in response to Kenneth’s proposal, and the emotion drained from his face once again.

Dale’s glare caused a shiver to run down Kenneth’s spine. His whole body trembled a bit, faced with an instinctive fear surpassing that of any hopeless situation he’d found himself in back when he was an active adventurer.

But at the same time, Kenneth felt truly astounded from the depths of his heart.

“Seriously... Just how dependent on Latina *are* you...?”

Dale let out a foolish *Bpfh!* sound, then said, “W-W-Wha... What... What are you saying...?!”



The bloodlust in the air scattered to the four winds.

Apparently Kenneth had hit the nail on the head.

Dale was so shaken that he grew openly embarrassed and started acting strangely, with his face turning beet red for a second. There was no hint of the fiend from a moment ago who had been mercilessly exposing even his friend of many years to such bloodlust.

“I could understand you getting that way when Latina went missing, but... Should you really be getting so serious about a mere prank like this?”

When she had been suddenly stolen away, it wasn't even certain if she was still alive. It was only natural that Dale would go mad with rage, as he loved the girl more than anyone and anything. But with that said, it would be rather ridiculous to talk about this current incident in the same manner. Doing so would surely prompt the fallen demon lords to turn in their graves.

“That's... Well, yeah, I guess...” Dale inarticulately agreed, apparently plenty aware of that fact.

“You're just mad because you're getting less lovey-dovey time with Latina, aren't you...?”

“That sure is a blunt way of putting things.”

“But it's the truth. Sugarcoating it wouldn't change anything.”

Hearing that, Dale ruffled his own hair. Seeing that gesture of embarrassment from the hero, Kenneth gave a single sigh and loosened the tension that had built up in his shoulders without him noticing.

“You need to cool your head, too. Then you can face this stupid mess head on.”

“You sure are taking their side...”

“Considering who they picked a fight with, doesn't hurt to give them that much of a handicap, right?”

As they talked, the edge completely came off of Dale. Kenneth felt relieved, seeing that his “little brother” was finally back to his usual self, and it wasn't

just for show. But it was also true that at the same time, he felt astounded. I mean, there was a limit to how deplorable someone could be.

“A stupid mess, huh... Well, doing something so stupid on such a huge scale is one way to throw a party, I guess...” Dale remarked lightly, apparently having allayed his anger enough that he could even find some amusement in the situation.

It would be a big dumb serious mess, with a whole ton of professionals having at it, including a certain legendary hero. He didn't seem to be taking into consideration the fact that if they made the town the stage for this, it would result in a chaotic uproar.

“Guess there's no helping it... Well, for the time being, I guess I'll go make sure the old hag isn't mixed up in all this. Let Latina know, alright?”

“Yeah. And if push comes to shove I can always just send Vint after you.”

That pup was seriously way too capable.

With a smile on his face, Dale stood up from the chair and went up to the attic to gather his luggage.

It was likely due to the fact that he had calmed himself down that Dale ultimately decided to head out right away. After all, he was aware that if he saw even a glance of Latina he would take back everything he said, lose control of himself, and stop at nothing to have her back in his arms.

After Dale departed for his home village, Latina really did end up returning before the night shift.

“Huh? Dale did that?” Latina asked upon hearing of Dale's sudden summons from Kenneth, a sad expression on her face.

Normally, the quoted time estimate of going there and back within a week would be called utterly impossible.

“I wasn't able to see him off properly... Was he mad?”

“Well, I guess I'd call it a mix of angry and astonished,” Kenneth replied.

Latina looked around at the regulars, pouting a bit.

From looking at her, it seemed she really hadn't expected Dale to have suddenly departed for his home village.

"I was told to keep all sorts of stuff secret from Dale, but... Even so, I at least wanted to discuss with him as much as I could. I never expected him to just leave like that..." Latina said, her shoulders slumping.

It seemed that she was taken away by the regulars without any explanation, but then was told that she could go back to the Ocelot for work, where she figured she could talk things over with Dale. She had been rather optimistic, thinking that if she at least made it clear where she would be, he wouldn't worry all that much.

Normally Latina's understanding of things wasn't that far divorced from common sense. But she actually didn't know that the regulars had sent a letter declaring their crime to Dale. As far as she knew, they were setting up to surprise Dale, and she was just helping. Plus she was told that Kenneth and Dale had been told in advance that she would be sleeping overnight elsewhere.

It was more than a small misunderstanding of the matter, but still, something far beyond what Latina expected was now unfolding.

"So what are those idiots planning, anyway?"

"I was told they wanted to persuade Dale. I don't really know of what or how, though..."

She had gotten wrapped up in something she didn't properly understand, but Latina somehow looked like she was enjoying herself.

Seemingly noticing Kenneth's quizzical look, Latina shot him a troubled looking smile.

"They just seemed like they were having so much fun that I just couldn't tell them no..."

"Well, I'm sure their knowledge of that personality of yours is part of the reason they were willing to go ahead with it."

"If they were putting Dale in danger I'd definitely be opposed, but... it doesn't seem like that. When I see the customers having so much fun, I can't help but

think Dale would enjoy himself, too...”

“And so you let yourself get taken?”

Latina’s strained smile grew just a little bit wicked.

“And also, I started enjoying myself a bit, too.”

In that manner, the prank continued to grow in scope.

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At this point the weather in Kreuz was often hot enough to leave any pedestrian a sweaty mess, but it was still mid-spring in Tislow, where the seasons were slow to change.

Gentle sunlight streamed in upon the complex patterns on the rug. The little old lady whose room it was drew over the tobacco tray and stuffed her pipe in a practiced motion.

“It’s not that hot here compared to how it is over there. If we start preparing now, we could hold the wedding ceremony before summer hit its peak.”

Wendelgard had already lived longer than most, but she treated Dale in just as aloof and easygoing a manner as always.

Dale was aware that his grandmother was in all likelihood offering the regulars support for their big dumb plan. After all, she found such things a source of personal amusement. It would really be stranger for her *not* to be involved.

She was acting too normally, as she puffed away at her pipe, for him to be entirely sure though.

“Just what are you plotting, calling me out here all of a sudden?”

“How accusatory. Rather than making such claims, perhaps you should dedicate that energy to wedding preparations already?”

“I’ve been thinking about that, too...”

“If I left it all up to you, I’d kick the bucket long before I got to see Latina dressed as a bride,” Granny Wen said, pointing to a Tislow bridal outfit that had been passed down through generations and was now sitting in the corner of her

room. "It'll take more than just a day or two to get that fixed up for her. It took some time for you to work up your nerves, too, and then you've been dragging your heels ever since."

"I have *not* been dragging my heels."

He may have been the hero of an epic, but it seemed he was still just a cheeky grandchild as far as Wendelgard was concerned.

"Dale, just a rough estimate is fine, but do you know Latina's height?"

"Huh...? I guess she's a bit shorter than Frida."

"What about her shoulder width?"

"She's got a smaller build..." Dale replied, getting caught up a little in his mother Magda's momentum as she measured the outfit and thought on the matter.

She seemed to be getting the idea from the way that Dale's hands were moving all around as he talked about Latina.

"It seems like it would be good to bring this part in quite a bit, doesn't it? She seems rather slender, after all."

"What about here?"

"Shall we try trimming it a bit? Ah, but I believe we need to be careful about bringing the bodice in too much."

The plan was to boldly pull in the skirt around her waistline, while only shortening the shoulder width of the upper portion.

Perhaps it was just what one should expect of Dale's mother, but Magda sensed from her son's hand motions alone just what a stylish girl Latina had grown to become. She realized not only was the girl slim overall, but also that certain parts of her had indeed grown quite thoroughly.

"Mother, I'll handle this part, so could you take care of the sash?"

"Alright. And then, could you talk to Yorck about making arrangements?"

Dale's sister-in-law, Frida, wasn't born in Tislow. As a result she didn't know about the traditions related to such attire, so she ultimately left the tricky parts

up to Magda.

When he thought on how his mother and sister-in-law were doing that needlework for his bride to be, a look of embarrassment flashed across Dale's face.

"Looks like we'll need some adjustments for you, too. I didn't think you *could* get any bigger," Magda said with a bit of an astonished sigh as she looked at Dale's upper arms. Dale's height was still the same as when he had brought Latina to visit back home, but his overall build had grown even more robust. She also got the feeling that he had come to resemble his father, which was a bit of a strange feeling.

"You don't need to do all that for me..." Dale stated bluntly, trying to cover up his embarrassment.

"You always say stuff like that. But you don't want to look shabby in front of your own bride, right?" Magda cut him off, seeing right through him.

He had taken advantage of his title of the most fearsome of heroes in the past, but even his confidence wavered when faced with the women of his family.

"We'll take care of preparations on our end, so make sure the bride is good and ready, too," Granny Wen said with a grin and a thin puff of smoke, looking just like a mischievous child.

With that Dale's exchange with his grandmother had concluded, and his mother had taken charge of adjusting the outfit, plus his measurements had been taken, so Dale wanted to head right on back to Kreuz, but he couldn't.

"So, how did it go?"

Those brief words had come from Dale's father, who was the effective clan head despite Granny Wen still holding the title on paper.

The letter to Dale had also said that if he was coming home, he should also bring back the magical devices presented to Vassilios as examples. Randolph's brief question referred to that matter.

"Right... Well I already let you know via my letter, but I presented her with a

magical device decorated with zoisite. Apparently over there the general process is to just polish things into spheres and then line them up. And so, she had an interest in the cutting process itself.”

“I see.”

“I also asked about the minerals naturally present in Vassilios, but... Well, I’ll write it all out in a report, later. I’m busy with some stuff myself right now.”

“Hmm... By the way...” Randolph started, turning his attention back away from the magic devices. “I figured you would say you were going to buy them all up as presents for the little miss, but did none of them catch her eye?”

Dale looked annoyed at his father’s words.

It felt like his old man had seen right through him, but that was no real surprise, as Dale was incredibly easy to read where Latina was involved.

Dale had figured buying it all up would be a good plan, but true to her exceptionally frugal view of money, Latina refused.

She was well aware of Dale’s personality, and knew full well that her adopted father/fiance doted on her so greatly that any question of price flew out the window. Plus ever since she was little, she was never the type to ask for unnecessary gifts. And so, this time around she ultimately just accepted one of them, in order to form a matching pair with her sister.

“She’ll be your daughter-in-law soon, so isn’t it a little odd to be calling her ‘little miss’?” Dale asked to annoy his father, getting revenge for how all-knowing the man had just been acting.

“Hrmm... Would it be alright to just call her by her name...?” Randolph questioned, looking troubled.

She may have been his daughter-in-law to be, but Latina was still a good bit younger than his son. It already made him feel somehow bashful, referring to her as “daughter.” And he had already sensed a portion of it to some degree when she was young, but she had an elegant beauty about her fitting to her position as the princess of a neighboring country. It was no surprise someone living out in the sticks like him would feel somehow intimidated.

Even ignoring the fact that his son was a country boy, the idea of him marrying a princess seemed unimaginable, so he had been ignoring it for the time being. He really was Dale's father and Granny Wen's son, to have taken such a route.

"If you go acting weirdly nervous, it'll make Latina nervous too..."

His father and bride nervously talking formally to one another... It was definitely easy to imagine that happening. Well, he actually did kind of want to see it a little, though...

Those were the thoughts running through Dale's head at the moment.

"...If I said I wanted to buy them all, would you have offered me a discount as a wedding gift?"

"With your finances, I figured you wouldn't mind adding a little extra on for the sake of your folks."

"That's what I thought you'd say," Dale replied with his usual awkward smile, seeing that his father's response had been just as expected.

By the way, the magical device presented to Chrysos was given as a gift from Tislow, but the matching one for Latina was paid for out of Dale's pocket. If Latina had known that she would have flatly refused, so Dale sent the payment back home on the sly.

But with that said, it was also a very simple matter, as Dale just wanted the gift for the girl he loved most of all to be from him. That was all there was to it.

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"Now then..."

Ultimately, Dale's stay in his home village exceeded his expectations, so by the time he made it back to Kreuz, nearly half a month had passed.

In addition to writing up a report, he also had to take care of various preparations for the wedding ceremony, which certainly added up. He also had a feeling he may have been taking on some responsibilities involved with leading the clan, but he opted to write that off as just his imagination.

Thanks to his pilgrimage to annihilate the demon lords the chaos in

neighboring countries was dying down, so he went ahead and took it easy- assuming the duke wouldn't be calling on him anytime soon.

He still chose to force his way through the mountains on the way back, though.

He certainly couldn't take the same path there with Latina in tow, but another leisurely trip back to his home village with her certainly sounded nice. In fact, he thought taking a while to travel around with her might not be half bad.

"First I'll have to go get Latina back, though," Dale muttered, turning his attention towards his left hand.

His name as a retainer of the Eighth Demon Lord was displayed there, serving as proof of his bond with his beloved "master."

"They'll know that I'm looking for Latina, but they won't know *how*..."

They would probably set up diversions and also spread false information throughout Kreuz. Normally, such methods would be very effective.

As he was now, though, Dale didn't need to gather information, as he could more or less sense where she was through their connection.

With that said, a surprise attack could still prove tricky... Dale thought to himself while walking in the direction he sensed Latina's presence from.

A certain high-powered radar of a pup was assuredly helping out on their side like it was only obvious to do so. They must have known by now that Dale had left his home village and was heading their way.

"Well, it'll be a big dumb mess. It's only polite to crush them fair and square," Dale said, giving his arm a preparatory spin as he headed to rescue the captured princess in the western district.

It was a little bit distorted, but Kreuz was built in the shape of a cross, just as its name implied. And the districts in each of the four cardinal directions had their own unique traits. The eastern district was a crafting district with shops and homes for craftsmen, while the southern district where the Dancing Ocelot was located was a rougher part of town with many facilities aimed at travelers. The center of town held temples as well as the local lord's manor and other

buildings that served to govern, and the northern district contained residences for nobles and other elites.

And then there was the eastern district, which held high class residences second only to those of the northern district.

That wasn't to say that the district held no relevance to professional adventurers like Dale. There were a number of successful adventurers, such as the famous Sylvester, who owned residences there.

And those successful adventurers were also regulars of the Ocelot. That was a fact, even if they just looked like old timers drinking cheap booze and gambling with cards in the middle of the day. It certainly wasn't something you could tell at a glance.

Dale figured that meant that this big dumb mess was set to unfold at one of their homes. After all, those old timers doted endlessly on Latina, so there was no chance they would make Latina stay in some filthy deserted house.

I get the feeling Latina would end up enjoying that, though...

Knowing Latina, she would have probably spent the last half month polishing up and renovating the place. He could easily see her diligently pushing around a mop and painting away at the walls. And that image in his mind looked a whole lot happier than when she was living as a princess. As those thoughts ran through his head, a grin broke out across Dale's face.

There wasn't any sense of urgency about him in the least.

He ended up stopping in front of one such residence.

It was a real manor, far larger than anything from the southern or eastern districts. It had a vast front garden beyond the high walls surrounding the grounds, and a brilliant large red roof could be seen further in, hinting at the size of the place.

More than all that, though, Dale's focus was on the large number of presences he sensed from the other side of the wall.

From the wry laughing he could hear, it would seem that his opponents had no intention of trying to hide.

As he had predicted, they were there laying in wait for him.

He didn't reach for his blade, as this was ultimately still just a "game."

Dale passed through the gate and set foot into the vast garden.

He may have been the unannounced intruder here, but even so, a large mass of masked men with ferocious smiles leapt at him. The group all had on sacks over their heads, with holes only cut out for the eyes. And in each of their hands, they held a long pole or club. They may not have had any blades on them, but they seemed plenty capable of killing.

"Hold on...! This is just way too much!" Dale yelled out. That wasn't because his opponents were wielding deadly weapons while he was unarmed, though. "What sort of suspicious characters are you supposed to be?!"

Dale (the actual intruder here) was unable to hold back that quip because nearly half of those "suspicious characters" were wearing the uniforms of the guards, who were supposed to be the ones cracking down on suspicious characters in the first place.

The other half had a mishmash of different outfits and gear, but it was easy to assume that they were adventurers.

It had already been plenty simple to guess at their members just from the name they had sent the notice of their crime under.

It was hard to tell if they were better described as having their faces hidden, or as having all *but* their faces plain to see. But at any rate, it sure did make them look awful suspicious.

Meanwhile, the side who had launched the attack was now hesitating.

The instant Dale stepped onto the grounds, the group waiting off to the side threw a net at him, just as they had planned. At the same time, the first unit struck out at him with their weapons. Even if he knew they were there, it simply wouldn't be possible to avoid such an all-out assault with such a limited choice of ingress.

Or at least, that was how it was supposed to be.

And yet, they had lost sight of Dale. The net which had lost its target fell upon

the earth completely empty, and the swung weapons smacked into the hard ground.

They all specialized in combat, too. But that skill of theirs was precisely what told them that they had misjudged their opponent's strength this time around.

A normal human could never easily jump more than the height of a grown man without so much as a run-up.

They had been unable to properly predict this deplorable hero's movements precisely because they had been operating under the assumption that their opponent was a human.

The attackers only realized their mistake when Dale counterattacked, kicking them down from outside of their encirclement.

Dale had realized they were laying in wait, so after entering into the grounds and confirming what course of action they were taking, he moved to evade the net before it was even thrown. The extraordinary power he had obtained by becoming a demon had a huge effect on his jumping power and the instantaneous force he could produce. Just a single step of run-up to go flying with his dominant foot was enough to get him around behind his opponents. He then landed safely, and wrapped it up by landing a kick on the masked man at the end of the line.

He had kicked him a bit hard, but he was considerate enough to aim for the man's rear, so as not to rupture any internal organs. It simply wouldn't do to have someone end up dead from a 'game' like this. Latina would end up crying, after all.

That didn't mean his opponent came out of the exchange unharmed, though. In fact, Dale had made the decision that anything went as long as he didn't deal a fatal blow. They were the ones running the thing, after all. And he had enough faith in them to just assume they had personnel who could use healing magic waiting in the wings.

Next up, he tripped several folks at once, sending them tumbling. At the same time, the first man he had kicked went flying into the front group, unable to stop his momentum. That didn't cause as much chaos as expected, though. Instead, they soon caught sight of Dale and got back in position. That wasn't a

bad decision. They really were well-coordinated, considering the group was of mixed backgrounds.

The corners of Dale's mouth turned up ever so slightly.

Kreuz's youngsters aren't half bad. That's good to see, Dale thought to himself, and then gave a strained smile when he realized he had started thinking similarly to those old timers at some point.

He grabbed the arm of a nearby youth and swept his legs, knocking him over. Then, feeling mischievous, he went ahead and easily lifted up a large man with his hands. It actually went surprisingly smoothly, as the man panicked when he was lifted and froze in a position that made him easier to handle.

While, I guess that's no surprise, since you don't usually ever find yourself in that position, Dale casually thought, then he went and chucked his poor victim. This was his first time using a human being as a projectile, too.

He found the somewhat inhumane act rather enjoyable, so he got carried away and ended up throwing a couple more people.

The staves swinging his way from all sides were being wielded with some rather skilled teamwork, but he dodged them by getting down low and closing the distance between them, even though he could have just knocked them away with his gauntlet. While listening to the sound of wood clashing overhead, he struck out with the palm of his hand. Then he turned around with a kick, snapping his opponent's weapon and sending yet another man flying.

In that way, the literally inhuman deplorable hero demonstrated to all present just why he was considered a legend. It was like something out of a nightmare, as if they were being torn to shreds one after another. Ah, there went another giant of a man flying through the air.

Even with all the masked assailants strewn groaning across the grounds, Dale wasn't even winded. Considering the number of opponents he was up against, he had mown them down so thoroughly you could call it a near instantaneous defeat.

After looking around to confirm that none of them were up for continuing, Dale placed his hand on the door to the manor. It didn't appear to be locked. At

first he suspected some sort of trap, but then he considered it from the perspective of his opponents. Dale didn't possess any lockpicking skills, so his only option for dealing with a locked door was to destroy it, which he would do without mercy.

Surely, the homeowner would want to avoid that. This was a rather splendid manor, after all. The repair cost for such an elaborate door was sure to be massive, and there was no way the owner would be happy having their home left wide open until it had been repaired.

Even if it was a trap, Dale had no choice at this point but to open the door.

His decisive confidence was exemplary of the epic hero he was, but at any rate, he went ahead and stepped into the manor.

The door opened with a *thud* that was somehow unfittingly gentle for the situation, only for sighs of relief to erupt from all around. And the source of one of those sighs sprawled out on the ground, removing his mask. His natural red hair was stuck to his forehead with sweat, so he roughly brushed it out of the way.

"We didn't even so much as scratch him..." one of the other men muttered, removing his mask.

"Owww... Are you alright?" the redheaded youth asked back listlessly, forcing himself to sit up. He hurt all over, not just where he was hit in the back.

"Somehow, after having come this far, it kinda just makes me want to laugh."

"Yeah... That guy was seriously a monster..."

Apparently they weren't the only ones feeling that way, as a number of the others gave similarly listless smiles.

Despite the fact they had used a net and other such relentless weapons, and had an overwhelming advantage in terms of numbers, their opponent had walked away unharmed. To really rub in his advantage, he wasn't even using a weapon.

"I wanted to at least slug him once, that's all..."

"That sort of display really makes you feel like giving up, doesn't it?"

His shoulders slumped all on their own. Still, somehow his own voice hadn't sounded quite as pathetic as he had expected.

There were quite a few amongst the members of Fairy Princess Protection Committee who were Latina's age who had held romantic feelings towards Latina.

It was no exaggeration to call her a drop-dead beauty, and as the proud adorable waitress of the Ocelot, she always greeted the customers with a kind, brilliant smile. And the fact that she would occasionally start joyfully humming out of tune or acting a bit airheaded showed that she wasn't the sort to put on airs.

It was like having a sort of extraordinary idol who they were all familiar with.

There was no way folks wouldn't end up falling for and admiring her.

Those youths then ended up getting fired up for this whole big stupid mess by the old timers who ran the Bodyguards.

In turn, that resulted in a "Who can slug Dale one?" challenge.

With that said, the regulars of the Ocelot had more or less planned all that out.

That deplorable hero would get all lovey-dovey with Latina whenever he saw the opportunity, regardless of where they may be or who may be watching. It was a truly insensitive way to behave, with no thought given to the heartbroken men left shedding manly tears in the background.

There were more than a few folks out there who wanted to land at least one solid hit on him, so the result was really no surprise.

There was also clearly a hidden fount of admiration within the hearts of the youths participating, with them clearly wanting the chance to take on a hero whose legend would be told well into the future. The old timers who got them fired up didn't bother pointing that out, though.

In fact, those old fogeys may have even tried to get them ever more worked up instead, telling them to go ahead and hit him because it was going to be a big dumb mess anyway.

This all resulted in a blatant demonstration of the difference in their strengths, but since they were aware of the underhanded means they'd used, the attackers couldn't even be mad about it. And at the same time, they also couldn't help feeling a bit relieved that their admiration for Dale was far from misplaced.

"Haah..." the redheaded youth sighed once again, then looked around.

The next time he saw *her* he'd have to congratulate her, no matter what he may really be feeling.

"So he's an opponent I can never overcome my whole life long... Well, maybe that won't be so bad."

There wasn't even a hint of gloom on the young man's face as he realized the man whose back he had been desperately chasing since he was young was still somewhere far off in the distance.

With that, he and his comrades who had all wanted to land a blow on Dale picked their wounded bodies up and set about withdrawing from the place.

Meanwhile, Dale advanced into the manor and found that it was every bit as exquisite on the inside as you would expect from the outside. Even the atrium in the entry hall alone gave a rather high-class impression.

The cream-colored striped wallpaper, reddish brown wooden furniture, and nonchalantly placed works of art all seemed first rate even to someone like Dale, who had a refined sense of aesthetics and was welcome at the manor of the duke, foremost of the Labandese nobles. The decor even lacked the gaudy ornamentation one would expect from an upstart's estate.

It was hard to imagine this manor belonged to someone related to those old timers who guzzled down cheap booze at that bar.

Of course Dale himself lived in the attic of that very bar despite his impressive standing and fortune, but as always he was blind to such personal matters.

At the front of the entrance hall there stood stairs leading to the next floor. There were elaborately engraved doors off to the left and right, colored so as to match the other furnishings.

Dale stopped in place, wondering which way to go, only for the left door to swing open as if it had been waiting for that very moment.

“Hehehe...” an unnatural chuckle sounded out, and when Dale was wondering who it was coming from, he was completely caught off guard. Or to be more accurate, he looked flat out astounded.

“What are you doing in a place like this...?”

“Hehehe...”

“Woof woof woof...”

Theodore, heir to the Dancing Ocelot where Dale lived, was there riding atop Vint and wielding a stick. The daring smile on his face was honestly kind of annoying, but the self-satisfied look on the face of the pup he was riding was even worse.

“You’re never gonna stop me, even swinging around something like—” Dale started to say, only for Theo to point overhead with his stick.

“Emma’s in danger!”

“Woof!”

“...Huh?”

As Dale stood there flabbergasted, Theo took off, riding on Vint’s back. Unsurprisingly considering Vint’s mobility, in the moment it took for Dale to come back to his senses, Theo had disappeared through the door that had apparently been reopened at some point.

“What the heck are they thinking...?” Dale muttered, looking back in the direction Theo had pointed. The hall that the staircase looked out on had an atrium, so Dale could see all the way to the ceiling. Even the molding on the steps and railings had a simple elegance to it. The skylight was brilliantly designed with the crossbeams radiating outwards, and there were two slender legs dangling in front of that backdrop.

It was then that Dale remembered the name that Theo had mentioned.

“ ... ”

Now that he had remembered, he couldn't just ignore the matter. And so, he dashed up the stairs, spun around, and took off running towards where he had seen the legs dangling.

"That little punk...!" Dale cursed, since just as expected, those legs indeed belonged to Theo's little sister, Emma. The young girl had been sitting on the other side of the railing, and was now looking up at Dale like she didn't quite understand what was going on.

Apparently Theo had at least taken some thought as to what may happen to his sister, as there were several strands wrapped around Emma's body, securing her to the railing. However, that was ultimately just childish naivete, as from an adult's point of view she was still in a great deal of danger.

"Emma, does anything hurt?"

"Hmm... Butt?"

"Ah... Yeah, the floor sure is hard. And it's cold, too, so you're probably chilly."

Putting aside the matter of Theo, young Emma had done nothing wrong. And so, Dale called out to her in a gentle tone as he reached for the knife at his hip.

"I'll cut you loose, so just hold still for a bit..."

Dale decided that he needed to cut her free as he couldn't just leave her there, but then he noticed just what those "strands" really were.

"That punk..." Dale cursed again, as he realized that the "strands" tying Emma in place were really Latina's beloved ribbons.

Even if he did cut them, Latina probably wouldn't be angry if he explained the circumstances. But if any of her favorites happened to be mixed in, she would be seriously disappointed.

Dale was, naturally, the sort of guy who couldn't accept seeing Latina make a face like that.

"Uuuuuugh...!"

As a result, Dale found himself struggling with the messy knots that Theo had made. It was a complex tangle combining both basic and granny knots, and Dale

was extremely tempted to just tear them apart with brute force.

He also had to pay an increasing amount of attention to keeping Emma from falling as he removed the ribbons.

“Gotta wee-wee.”

“Whoa, that’s getting way too relaxed there...! Just hold on a little longer!”

Dale lifted Emma up and realized that he had fallen for yet another of Theo’s plots. The crux of the plan was the fact that he had retreated atop Vint.

“Damn...”

If Theo was still around, Dale could have pushed Emma off onto him. But right now, Dale was the only one around.

It would be far too dangerous to leave little Emma on her own in an unfamiliar place. And since he could easily be attacked again like before at any moment, he wanted to avoid bringing her along with him.

Above all else, though, Emma was currently struggling with an emergency situation that was getting worse by the moment.

“Theo... I’m going to scold you till you cry later...!”

“Later?” Emma innocently mimicked as Dale held her tight.

The solution Dale settled on was a full-on sprint to take Emma back to the Dancing Ocelot.

Theo had done a splendid job of using the means available to him to successfully delay the most fiendish of all heroes.

Not wanting to waste time running down the stairs, Dale simply hopped over the handrail, leaping down without hesitation. He made sure to obstruct Emma’s view on the way down, as he didn’t want her to get scared and let anything leak out. Emma was innocently giggling away like she thought they were just playing or something, but there was also a hint of valor about her, somehow. Well, she *was* the daughter of Rita and Kenneth. She may have been a girl, but there was no guarantee that she would come out all gentle and ladylike. Her parents were hoping that she would learn from Latina’s personality and work ethic, but it was far from certain that things would turn

out that way.

Dale flew outside and noticed that, while he'd been struggling with those knots, the men he'd beaten down earlier had all cleared themselves out. Rather than stopping to make sure, though, he just kept on running. He did need to make sure to pick a route with few people around, though, since it was hard to say if even a large carriage would come out on top if it got in his way.

When Dale plunged headfirst into the Ocelot, he actually didn't head straight for Kenneth or Rita. That was because preserving Emma's dignity took priority.

Emma soon had a thoroughly relieved look on her face, but in the meantime, Dale gave Kenneth a simple explanation of what had happened. The man was quite doting on his daughter, so the deep furrowing of his brows at the moment came as no great surprise.

"So when Theo gets back, make sure you apprehend him."

"You mind if I give him a scolding while you're gone?"

"Sure, why not?"

In that instant, it was determined that Theo would be facing a lecture not only from Dale upon his return home, but also from his father.

He may have carried out the task that had been assigned to him, but he was paying a great price in exchange.

The pup was just a pup, though, so chewing him out wouldn't do much good.

Dale handed Emma over to Kenneth, then took off running back towards the eastern district. As he left, Emma called out, "Bye-bye!" from her father's arms.

The people Dale passed by on the street looked at him like they were seeing something not of this world. For a while afterwards, there was an urban legend throughout Kreuz of some strange apparition that passed you by on the streets.

When he made it back to the front of the manor, he couldn't sense the presence of another round of assailants. That was perfect, as Dale was a bit peeved at the moment and wasn't sure he could hold back like he had before. The decision to retreat certainly seemed to have been the correct one, as otherwise they may well have found themselves the outlets for Dale's merciless

fury.

He flung the door open rather forcefully.

He stomped forwards into the manor, then threw open the door to the left that Theo had come out of before.

“You sure seem annoyed,” Sylvester called out.

“Alright, time to beat this damn prank into submission...” Dale replied with a grin on his face.

Dale snapped his fingers and smiled like his anger had quelled at finally locating the ringleader behind this big dumb mess.

“Should I land a blow or two on you as thanks?”

“You know you’re supposed to respect your elders, right?”

“That only applies to old folks worth respecting, though.”

Despite Dale’s violent statement, Sylvester wasn’t able to hold back a smirk. It really went to show the guts the man had.

Before Dale could take so much as a step forward, Sylvester stated, “Anyway, we already fulfilled our win conditions.”

“What are you...?” Dale started to ask, but a door further in had opened alongside Sylvester’s words, and... Dale fell flat on his face with shock.

Sylvester grinned even further.

“U-Um, Dale...? It may sound odd to say it considering the circumstances, but welcome home.”

“...”

“Are you alright?”

“...”

“Dale?” Latina questioned in a panic, looking at his collapsed figure.

Latina had heard of Dale’s trip to Tislow, which was why she was now telling him “welcome home.” Still, she really did feel like her usual aloof self when she went ahead and said that in a situation like this.

At any rate, Dale currently wasn't able to respond. A perfect surprise attack had been launched on him in a way he had never expected. And the amount of damage it had caused was immeasurable.

"This was just thrown together with some temporary sewing. Well, don't you want to see the little lady wearing a proper one?" Sylvester mercilessly called out to Dale from behind, like a devil trying to smooth talk him with a wicked grin. "You wanna see it, right? We'll set things up proper so the completed item will really match your tastes, y'know?"

He hinted that everything wasn't fully settled just yet.

"Come on, take a good look," Sylvester said, grabbing the now red-eared Dale by his shoulder.

"Wait...! No, you see, right now, I just can't...!" Dale muttered, but he lacked the power to resist and was thus turned to face a worried looking Latina.

His breath reflexively caught in his throat.

Latina was wearing a pure white dress.

Dale of course knew what that lily-white outfit was, as such things were becoming a trend amongst nobles as of late.

It had a completely different sort of impact than the traditional bridal attire from Tislow Dale had been looking forward to seeing Latina wear.

The glimmering dress sparkled gently in the light alongside her platinum hair. As one might expect from a preliminary design, the dress was currently a simple affair with hardly any ornamentation to speak of.

But seeing Latina's whole body wrapped in light like that, she was so beautiful that she could even be called divine.

The sight of her had long since been burned into Dale's brain, but she was giving off a completely different impression now. After all, above all else, she was currently dressed as a bride.

His head was practically overflowing with potential comments, but he just wasn't mentally prepared, so Dale didn't speak a word.

Normally he would let loose an onslaught of the word "cute" in response to

Latina's pure white attire, but he was just plain overwhelmed at the moment.

This was precisely what Sylvester's Fairy Princess's Bodyguards had hoped to accomplish.

That group was well aware of the fact that when it came to persuading Dale, the sight of Latina in that wedding dress was worth far more than a thousand words. After nearly ten years of watching him excessively dote on the girl, that was more than just a mere assumption.

There were numerous other ways they could've gone about things, but by making a big dumb mess like this, it turned the affair into one large festival of sorts. And that served as a sort of preliminary entertainment for the wedding itself.

Ever since returning from her birth country, Latina occasionally seemed to brood over something. And since Latina had suddenly disappeared, even though she had returned, Dale was terribly afraid that she would be stolen away from him again.

It wasn't as if the reasoning behind those concerns was hard to understand. However, the bunch really wanted them to be able to forget about their worries, at least for the sake of taking center stage in their own wedding.

Old timers were meddlesome by nature like that.

And of course, there were plenty who had the couple's flirting drilled into their heads and who decided to use the opportunity to vent some of their frustrations on Dale.

Even if the dress was just made with some temporary sewing, it still needed time to prepare. Plus, they needed to get Latina changed into it before Dale arrived.

And so, the Fairy Princess Protection Committee's victory condition was to buy time for those two goals to be met.

The fact that Dale now looked like he was feeling more embarrassed than he had ever been in his whole life and was left at a loss as to what to do showed that the old timers must have really hit the mark.

When Dale returned to the Dancing Ocelot alongside Latina after that big dumb mess came to a close, he found a letter from Granny Wen in Tislow waiting for him. The timing of its arrival gave him a seriously bad feeling.

Dale cut through the letter's seal with a frown on his face, gave the contents a cursory glance, and then furrowed his brows even further.

What was written there was the fixed date for the ceremony, as well as instructions to prepare.

"That damn hag...!" Dale angrily let slip, causing Latina to take a step back in surprise.

There was no helping Dale wanting to curse. After all, it was written clearly there that they were to hold the reception in Kreuz, then journey to Tislow for the ceremony.

His grandmother had dodged the question when he was in Tislow a few days prior, but it seemed she really had been working together with Latina's "bodyguards." And apparently she had already accepted their demands and even worked them into her plans, on top of that.

Normally, one would hold the reception after the wedding ceremony. Granny Wen's instructions surprisingly went against that, though. The reception would allow them to celebrate in Kreuz, and then they would send forth the bride as per Tislow tradition. After that they would hold a Tislow-style ceremony at Dale's family home, where they would be unveiled to the clan. Those instructions incorporated the demands of the Bodyguards, but it could also be seen as a show of consideration and gratitude towards the people who'd cared for Latina since she was a child.

And for the reception in Kreuz, there was no need for her to follow Tislow tradition in terms of what she wore. Granny Wendelgard made sure to specifically make note of that in her letter.

But with that said, no matter how much Dale may curse and complain, he had already given his consent, so he had to play along with bringing their plans to life.

Thus, it was officially decided with Dale's approval that Latina would be unveiled in a pure white wedding dress, just like the Platinum Fairy Princess Protection Committee had wanted.

"Now all those documents I gathered up will finally be put to use, right?"

"Y-yeah..."

Dale had been dragged along by Latina to the workshop that also served as Chloe's family home, only for the girl to greet them with an incredibly bright and sunny smile on her face.

"Latina was saying she didn't want to go forward with her wedding outfit just based on her own tastes..." Chloe said with a giggle, causing Dale to look a bit embarrassed.

"It's just, considering your plans for after the reception, I wasn't so sure about the sort of binding corsets nobles use, or anything with overly long sleeves, so I recommend basically sticking to these sorts of contours..."

As Chloe explained, she lined up design sheets for dresses with the relevant contours to them. Dale didn't care much about his own outfit and said he would let others just handle it, so now that it came time to look over women's clothing, he looked just about ready to turn tail and run.

"This design is cute... What do you think, Dale?"

"I think you can get a pretty mature feel to it depending on the type of lace you use. For example, if you use some from the same workshop as this..."

"But I'm only going to wear it the one time, so spending so much would be a little..."

"Don't worry so much about that."

At least on that point, Dale and Chloe were in complete agreement.

"If we're going to have it custom-made regardless, I don't think there's any need to compromise on it," Dale replied, which caused Chloe to break out in an even brighter smile than Latina. Having gotten the verbal go-ahead from her sponsor, she went ahead and started piling up more materials.

"This lace is imported, but it's incredibly fine and I think it would really stand

out. Also, it's like this in the design sheet, but how about decorating it with something like this... Ah, this'll work as an example, so what do you think?"

The questions just kept on coming.

Bowled over by Chloe's swelling momentum, Dale honestly couldn't recall just what exactly he'd agreed to. Despite being the groom, he would end up having to wait till the day of for the dress's proper unveiling. And Chloe just waved farewell with a smile, telling him to look forward to it.

The main reason behind that choice was because Dale was getting more deplorable and making more of a pain of himself as the wedding approached, and that only seemed like it was going to get worse. Everyone around him was already well aware of that fact, too.

From the next day onward, both Chloe and Latina started working at a quick yet careful pace to complete the wedding dress.

In the half-month since the plan kicked off, the floor of the workspace had grown so coated in various materials that there was no longer even room to walk.

In the middle of all that sat a pure white silk gauze intended for a veil. Normally such a thing could only be made in the temple of Quirmizi, as that light, delicate, gentle fabric was more than simply a tailoring material. No, it was also a sort of amulet, imbued with a blessing.

"Even high ranking nobles can't prepare such wonderful silk for their wedding veils!" Chloe excitedly exclaimed while clutching the material to her chest, her thoughts racing as to what veil design would go best with the dress.

"Really?"

"Dale can handle the final blessing ritual, right?"

"Yeah, probably."

"Craftsmen only rarely ever have a chance to make it in the first place, after all. I really am lucky to have a chance to make a headdress out of it."

Latina tilted her head, but she didn't seem to have any question as to the source of that material that could "only be prepared at the temple." Chloe,

meanwhile, just gave a strained smile.

It really wasn't the sort of material you could get ahold of in half a month. And the number of people who could help get ahold of something like that, which wasn't normally distributed, was quite limited.

"You sure are cared for."

"Hmm?"

Chloe glanced over at Latina tilting her head, then set about tidying up the material in a way that wouldn't leave any creases. Then, she used a marking pin to affix some lace to the glamorous silk dress that would be wrapped around her best friend's torso.

Latina didn't just discuss her wedding dress with Chloe. No, she got involved with the needlework, too. And as a result of her devoting so much time to the work, she ended up neglecting Dale. He didn't act all gloomy over it this time around, though.

Dale was considered a priest of Quirmizi, the god who presided over marriage. As such, wedding ceremonies fell within his field. Normally he didn't look priestly in the least, but he was actually a serious person at heart, so Dale was busy diligently preparing.

After all, it was his beloved Latina's wedding ceremony. Or to be more accurate, the wedding of the dear girl he doted endlessly upon. Ever since she was a child, he'd struggled with feelings about the thought of her one day being happily married.

Currently, he held both the feelings of a groom set to marry his beloved bride, as well as a father seeing the daughter he raised about to get married. That made him twice as much of a pain.

It was decided that the reception would be held in the Dancing Ocelot. That decision seemed only obvious not just to Dale and Latina, but also to everyone around them.

As a result, Dale inspected the inside of the shop day after day while thinking thoroughly on the arrangements for the event.

“If we moved this... could we set up an altar here? Kenneth, is it alright if I move the stuff around here?”

“As long as you put everything back where it was once you’re done, I don’t care.”

“And then...”

“Ah, right, we’re planning to leave one of the customer rooms open. Rita said we’d need it so that Latina could change and stuff.”

“Right... It would be pretty difficult to come down the stairs from our room in a dress, huh...?”

“I went ahead and calculated the amount of food and booze you’ll need, but if you have any requests for particular dishes or brands, go ahead and let me know.”

Planning things out with Kenneth like this brought Dale joy now, too.

“No matter how I figure it, there are just going to be too many guests to fit them all in the shop... We’re going to need to prepare for quite a lot of people.”

“We’re planning on closing down for the day of the reception, but we’ll have to announce that somehow...”

Since the Dancing Ocelot acted as a terminal for the temple of Akhdar, that meant it served as an important public facility for distributing information. And so, it couldn’t exactly take closing down for the day lightly.

“I get that it’s necessary, but still...” Dale said, a troubled look on his face.

“I’ll have to let all of this place’s customers know the date and time of the reception at the same time...”

It was easy enough to picture the place being swarmed with folks wanting to catch even a glance of Latina dressed as a bride. It really was questionable how exactly holding the reception “in” the Ocelot would turn out.

“How about if we prepare the backyard and send folks around there, too?”

“We could use my magic, and have Vint help out, too... His wind magic should help with cutting the grass and stuff. And we should work Theo hard, too.”

“I can’t forgive him for getting Emma mixed up in everything, either, so work him to the bone.”

Thanks to that discussion between Dale and Kenneth, the sum of Theo’s punishment was finally decided. He may have managed to pull one over on the world’s most dangerous hero, but the price he paid for it was great. If he at least hadn’t used his little sister in his plan, his father probably wouldn’t have been so hard on him, but it was too late for that now.

Dale’s earth magic was a huge help in leveling out the ground, naturally, but he left the rest of the weeding and cleanup to Theo.

Vint, meanwhile, soon grew sick of the job. Or to be more accurate, he just started playing around and digging holes, so he had to be kicked out. And then, Theo had to fill in the holes, half in tears.

Normally Latina would stand up for him, but she had been going over to Chloe’s house to help sew day after day. The circumstances really were stacked against young Theo.

At the same time, a truly strange sight was unfolding inside the Ocelot.

“Polish it all thoroughly. After all, your strength is all you’re good for,” Dale said with a grin as the old timers who made up the regulars were down on their hands and knees, running rags across the floor. And they were putting so much strength into it that it looked like the friction was going to wear right through their rags.

It was a strange enough sight that anyone happening to visit the shop would just stand there and stare in bewilderment.

“Work to make up for the trouble we made, huh?”

“Don’t forget the stairs, either. Afterwards you’ll wax and then polish again, but first you better make sure you get all the dirt up,” Kenneth added relentlessly, as Dale’s statement could be taken as meaning the old timers were being let off lightly for the whole mess they had caused.

Preparing the inside of the shop where the ceremony would be held was also a job undertaken for the sake of their beloved Latina. In that way, it could be seen as a point of compromise that benefited both Dale, who had gotten

wrapped up in that big dumb mess, as well as the old timers who had caused the whole thing in the first place.

But when it came to cleaning, Kenneth was incredibly strict. He apparently saw it as a good opportunity to thoroughly polish up the shop, and so he mercilessly instructed his elders to keep on cleaning.

As a result of all that, by the time the day of the wedding arrived, every last bit of the Ocelot was positively sparkling. And in turn, the regulars' cleaning skills had also undergone a meteoric rise in that short period of time.

4: Sequel: The Platinum Maiden Becomes a Bride

At last, the day had arrived.

It was like they had picked out the weather themselves, as the clear sky above the Dancing Ocelot was a beautiful shade of blue.

One of the customer rooms had been set aside to be used as a waiting room for the bride, and a large mirror was set up there for her. Atop the thin carpets that Rita had laid out, Chloe was helping Latina slip her arms through the sleeves of her wedding dress.

Normally such preparations would be handled by female relatives, but Latina was a bit limited in that regard. And so, Rita and Chloe were lending her a hand instead.

Rather than feeling ecstatic at the sensation of the high class silk atop her skin, Latina seemed more overcome with emotion, as her grey eyes were already tearing up.

“That was quick.”

“Yeah, it sure was.”

The shock of not only Chloe but also Rita quipping at her with awkward smiles on their faces caused her tears to withdraw a bit.

The pure white shoes matching her dress were also brand new, of course. The delicate flower decoration sewed into the shoes was also lily white, and so Latina was childishly thrusting her foot out from under her dress to see, then happily smiling away.

“Alright, now sit.”

“Right.”

Latina went ahead and sat down in the chair that was pointed out to her. Rita then grabbed hold of a wooden comb and started carefully combing Latina’s platinum hair. Once she had finished taking thorough care of it, she smoothly

slid the tips of her fingers through it.

“You really do have pretty hair,” Rita sighed in admiration, then coated her palms with Latina’s favored pomade. She took care of Latina’s hair so up close and personal that her body heat was transferring over to it. Then she separated the hair into several tufts and did it up in a complex shape.

“It feels like so long since you last did up my hair, Rita.”

“That’s for sure.”

When Latina was young, Rita had done up her hair each and every day.



As they reminisced over times long past, the pair's faces met in the mirror and they smiled at one another.

Meanwhile, Chloe finished up the final preparations on the dress, checking over the laced up back, and then called out in a satisfied voice, "Alright, it's perfect! I'd expect nothing less from myself!"

Of course, her best friend was talking about her own work, there. Latina smiled somewhat uncomfortably in response, then said in a bit of a sulking voice, "Even if it's just flattery, I'd like to hear your impressions about me, too..."

"Everything looks good on you, Latina. And besides, my impressions aren't the ones that you really want," Chloe said with a smirk, then walked in front of Latina and spread out her makeup box. "Now then, it's time for this... Don't move, alright?"

"Yeah."

When you weren't used to someone else rubbing cream and patting powder into your skin, it sure did tickle.

Latina desperately held back the urge to break out laughing, forcing her face into a stoic expression.

"...Alright, all done."

Before long, Rita attached the veil that was the symbol of a bride to Latina's done up hair, then drew her hands away. She then took a step back and looked over the girl's whole body before giving a satisfied nod.

"You look beautiful, Latina," Rita said to the bride with a smile, choking up just a bit.

"Thank you, Rita," Latina replied, her voice also overcome with emotion.

"I'm done here, too... Alright, that looks great."

"Thank you too, Chloe."

"Don't worry about it... But still, is it really alright for your sister from back in your home country not to be here?"

Normally female relatives were the ones to help a bride get dressed, so Chloe couldn't help but question the fact that Latina's one living relative, her sister, hadn't been called here.

Chrysos was the ruler of a nation so she couldn't be called for so easily, nor were Vassilios and Laband close enough to make travel between the two nations a simple matter.

Even so... Chloe thought, thinking of her best friend.

"In Vassilios... There's no custom of getting married. I talked to Chrysos a bit about it before, but..." Latina started, looking a bit troubled as she recalled her sister's words. "I know that men and women living together is a human custom, but still... When I brought that up, she said that I'm a devil, so I should live in Vassilios and Dale can just visit when I have need for him..."

"So it ended up being a pain."

"Yeah, that's sort of how it felt..." Latina said with a strained smile, stroking her dress as she searched for the words she wanted to say. "But even so, it wasn't as if she was opposed. She just has complicated feelings about it, because we can't live together." And then she quietly added, "...I didn't think I would ever be able to tell Chrysos I was getting married in the first place, so that's more than enough for me..."

"...I see."

Chloe and Rita knew how Latina had been exiled from her birth country at a young age and was raised by people who had been strangers, so they understood the sentiment behind what she had said. And so, they chose to speak up in intentionally cheerful voices, so that the bride's makeup wouldn't be ruined by tears before the ceremony even began.

"Alright, that's enough of that solemn stuff!"

"I'm sure he can't hold himself back much longer, so I'll go call for Dale. Are you ready, Latina?"

"Yeah," Latina replied, and then Rita opened the door, only to find the man she had been planning to summon already standing there.

“Wah...! What the...? You were there the whole time?” Rita questioned, looking astounded. Dale, meanwhile, pouted a bit.

“There’s no way I’d ever go that far... I just figured it was about time, so I came to ask how things were going.”

“Well, whatever. Latina’s all ready.”

Rita then opened the door wide, unable to hold back the wide grin on her face.

Hearing that conversation, the same sort she had heard those two share since she was a child, the tension drained from Latina and she looked at Dale with a smile.

At first Dale looked surprised, but then his expression shifted into a sort of embarrassed look full of complex emotions.

“...You’re beautiful,” he let slip.

Normally he would unleash an onslaught of “cute” and “adorable,” so that single different bit of praise from Dale made Latina feel overjoyed and caused her cheeks to flush red.

“I already knew full well that you were a beauty, but still...”

Dale was embarrassed, but he didn’t look away from Latina as he continued on, “You really are... a beautiful bride.”

The serious expression on Dale’s face gave way to a bit of a smile.

“Back when I first met you... I never imagined I would one day see you like this.”

“Yeah,” Latina responded with a smile, knowing that Dale had seen her as a small child for so long.

“Now, I can’t ever imagine letting you go...”

Before, as her guardian, he had thought that if she was going to one day get married, he would be there by her side to see her off. But now, it was hard to imagine ever considering such a thing.

This girl, more beautiful than any other, was dressed as a bride in order to

stand by his side. And he couldn't imagine it being any other way.

"Thank you, Dale... For answering my selfish request that we always be together."

Dale's smile showed a bit of an awkward edge at Latina's words, and then he held up the holy symbol that identified him as a priest, which was quite unusual for him to do.

His expression shifted once again as he started smoothly chanting a prayer. It was a blessing ceremony that he had absolutely wanted to do for her, as a guardian.

"Become the happiest bride in the whole wide world."

"Right," Latina responded to those words with a smile that came from the depths of her heart.

Normally the floor of the Dancing Ocelot would be trampled upon by adventurers coming and going with filthy shoes, but thanks to the polishing it got from the regulars, there wasn't so much as a scuff on it, with the amber colored wood grain really shining. And the staircase leading from the second floor guest rooms down into the bar was no exception. That didn't apply to just the steps, either, as the railing and walls had also been polished.

Latina slowly descended those stairs with Dale holding her hand.

A sigh of admiration escaped from all the customers who saw Latina.

She was a bride clad in pure white. The waist portion of the upper half came up high, and the long skirt down below extended all the way to the floor. The skirt made of layers of fine lace swayed along as Latina moved, looking incredibly soft.

It wasn't simply solid white, though.

The high class silk had fine lace sewn onto it. And the embroidery of the chest portion incorporated pearls ordered from far away alongside the white silk thread. The dress was made using all sorts of materials, and shone in a truly elaborate manner.

Latina's own platinum hair shone amongst all that brilliance, too. It was

braided up in a complex pattern, and had a thin silk veil atop it.

The decorative flower affixed to that veil was the only bit of brilliant color that Latina had to her outfit. The live flower was a bitter orange, the color of Quirmizi, the god who presided over marriage, and it added an adorable lively feel to the outfit that really suited Latina.

The pair made it down the stairs, then advanced before the simple yet official altar set up in the middle of the store. Dale held his sacred symbol in his hands and began chanting a prayer.

“It’s almost like he’s a proper priest...” one of the regulars muttered, but Dale didn’t so much as lift an eyebrow as he carried out the ritual.

The final line of Dale’s recited chant lightly reverberated throughout the space.

Latina’s long eyelashes had been facing down as she listened, but she now looked Dale’s way with a gentle smile. Dale, meanwhile, responded in kind.

The chant had been one to bless the bride and the groom, making it part of the preparations for the ceremony. The rest of Dale’s role as a priest would come when they arrived in Tislow.

And so, from here on out Dale stopped being a Quirmizi priest and returned to simply being the groom.

The pair were seated beside one another in the middle of the Dancing Ocelot, which had been prepared for the reception. The first one to stand before the two of them was Kenneth. That was only fitting, as it was the marriage between his “little bro” and his pupil.

“Guess there’s no point in telling the two of you to get along now, but... Well, try to keep it under control,” Kenneth said, holding out a single flower. “Be happy, you two.”

“Thank you, Kenneth,” Latina replied, accepting the flower along with his words, then placed it atop the legged stand as per Tislow tradition. There was a large basket atop that stand, and Kenneth’s flower was the first one to go inside.

“Don’t make too much trouble for Latina, alright? Congratulations,” Rita said in her usual tone, following after her husband and handing Dale a flower.

With a bit of an awkward smile, Dale earnestly replied, “Thanks.”

“Sis, congrats!”

“Congwats!”

Theo and Emma had come next, mimicking their parents by smiling and holding out brilliant yellow flowers.

Afterwards, the pair continued to receive blessings without pause.

So many people had gathered that they couldn’t possibly all be contained within the Ocelot. In order to avoid too much chaos erupting, Kenneth and Rita handed out booze to the attendees who had offered their blessings, then led them to where a light meal had been laid out. Naturally, they had set up the tables in front of the Ocelot and in the back yard in order to limit the number of people within the shop itself.

Latina glanced repeatedly their way, unable to hide her interest in the work being done behind the scenes despite being the star of the whole event. It really was just like her.

“I wish you happiness, little lady,” Sylvester said with red eyes, dressed in nice clothing of a sort he wasn’t accustomed to wearing. The outfit really made him look like a celebrity.

When Latina took the flower he had offered with a smile, he held his eyes and looked utterly overcome with emotion.

The regulars all offered their blessings, then made space for the attendees lined up behind them. Dale may have been fine as he was a monster in terms of stamina, but as the ceremony stretched on longer and longer, it would put more and more of a burden on Latina. You really could tell just how skilled those “Bodyguards” were from how thoroughly considerate they were being.

Naturally, Latina’s childhood friends were also in attendance.

Marcel brought bread from his family’s bakery as a gift, which he laid out on a table where attendees were gathering. This also served the business goal of

gaining new customers, which really showed his personality.

When Anthony saw her for the first time in a while, he told her about how things were going now that he had started working at the lord's manor as he presented her with a widely blooming flower.

And when Rudolph showed himself, he was wearing his guard uniform.

"I know it's your important celebration, but I had to slip out of work to make it," he said, refusing the alcohol he was being offered.

Then, Rudolph turned towards Dale rather than Latina and handed him a flower.

"...I wish you happiness."

Dale wasn't uncouth enough to make light of the emotions behind the youth's brief words, so he simply accepted them along with a smile.

Chloe was near the back of the line, and when she saw that the basket behind Latina and Dale was already nearly full, she couldn't help but break out in a strained smile. That mass of flowers was proof of just how many people had come to offer their blessing.

"It really is amazing..." Chloe said with an awkward chuckle, only for Latina to cheerfully respond, "I'm a little surprised myself."

With that, Chloe looked straight at her friend and said, "Don't go saying, 'Now my dreams have come true.'"

Latina could feel the tears starting to well up with those words from her friend, who had worried about her ever since they were little.

Sensing that, Chloe gave Latina a sudden smack to the forehead.

"Ow!"

"Keep it together. Don't go crying on me."

"...Right," Latina replied, looking up.

Chloe smiled brightly back at her friend.

"Find happiness, Latina."

“Yeah,” Latina responded with a sunny smile of her own.

The flowers overflowing from the basket served as a symbol of the blessings offered to the couple by those present. As such, they couldn’t be treated lightly. Accordingly, they bundled them together into a proper bouquet, which Latina then held in both arms.

Dale then easily scooped up Latina in his arms and carried her outside of the Ocelot.

According to Tislow wedding traditions, a bride wasn’t to step foot on the ground until she was married into her husband’s family.

Latina gave a slightly embarrassed smile as Dale cradled her in his arms.

The guests outside the shop, meanwhile, raised their glasses up and kicked off the banquet.

Everyone cheered with the appearance of the day’s stars, and flower petals of all colors whirled up into the air.

Dale walked slowly down the path, which was now beautifully coated with those flower petals from the guests.

Latina smiled at the thought of being in the middle of the sort of sight she had admired since she was little, with a bride passing down such a colorful street, and she had to desperately hold back her tears of joy.

From there, Dale circled around to the Ocelot’s back yard. There were two mythical beasts waiting there for their arrival.

Hagel was wearing a platinum saddle, which already had a basket full of flowers displaying the blessings from the guests attached to it.

Even though Hagel had a totally different sense of values, he apparently also found Latina’s appearance to be truly stunning, as he got down low to the ground and squinted his eyes.

Dale got up atop Hagel’s saddle, still holding Latina in his arms. He was about to get going then and there, but the jeers from the regulars caused him to glance around with a bit of an astonished look in his eyes.

The old timers were already good and drunk as usual, and they seemed to

find Dale's reaction a good compliment to their booze, as they soon erupted in hearty guffaws.

Dale paid no attention to the contents of that heckling, and instead just lightly seated himself behind Latina, who had tilted her head. Then he drew Latina's face in close.



The surrounding guests, the regulars at their core, raised a cheer.

Latina blinked in surprise, then realized a bit late that Dale had kissed her with all of these people watching. She of course then went beet red all the way to the tips of her ears.

From atop Hagel's saddle, Dale looked down upon the surrounding crowd with an undaunted expression.

"Dale...!" Latina objected in an embarrassed voice as she sat sideways on the saddle.

"Hmm? You want to do it again?"

Despite her embarrassment, Latina didn't object to that response from Dale.

Dale looked a bit surprised at the unexpected reaction from Latina, but then he went ahead and drew his lips near hers once again.

Latina, meanwhile, averted her eyes and gripped his sleeves like she had done since she was a child.

Another loud cheer filled the air.

"Split up!" Vint stated, failing to read the mood, and then spread his wings and took off into the sky. The bell around his neck gave a refreshing jingle. Vint's role was to herald the bride's arrival, so once he was in the air, Hagel also spread his wings.

Those present wearing guard uniforms covered their faces with their hands. Seeing that expression signifying that they would ignore a mythical beast taking off from the middle of town for today, Hagel went ahead and flapped his massive wings.

The guests surrounding them all threw flower petals into the air simultaneously. Spurred on by Hagel and Vint's wind magic, they flew high up into the sky. When the two mythical beasts took off, it almost looked like they were running along a bridge made of flower petals.

"Well then..."

"We're off!"

Dale and Latina waved farewell with smiles on their faces, and everyone responded in kind.

Hagel made one loop above everyone's heads, then started heading towards Tislow.

"Take care, Sis!" Theo yelled out as loud as he could manage, vigorously waving his hands. The attendees, some of them spurred on by the alcohol in their systems, also started enthusiastically waving.

They saw the pair off on the new path they now walked, wishing them good fortune on their journey.

And they kept on doing so until they disappeared beyond the brilliantly colored bridge in the sky, which looked almost like a rainbow.

†

After leaving Kreuz, Dale and Latina made it all the way through the skies to Tislow without incident.

Vint had once flown the distance in two days and one night, but Hagel was able to make the voyage in less than a day. And this time around, he aimed to make it in even less time. After all, Latina was wearing a wedding dress, which was no outfit for a long journey. It simply wouldn't do to have to stop to camp out midway there.

With all that said, it didn't end up being anything too difficult.

Hagel and Vint were both talented with wind magic to begin with, and Latina's defensive magic reduced the wind resistance to a minimum. And Dale's earth magic was highly effective at recovering stamina, allowing Hagel to keep on soaring through the sky at full speed.

At the start Vint ran alongside his father, but he soon realized he couldn't match his father's speed, so he spent the rest of the voyage perched between Hagel's head and the saddle where Dale and Latina were riding. And occasionally, Latina would pet him, which brought him great delight.

Looking at it logically they were moving at a truly frightening speed, but as a result, they were able to arrive at their destination before sunset. Hagel was

quite serious about keeping the promise that neither his side nor the people of Tislow would intrude upon one another's territory, so he stopped and hovered over the village rather than landing. Vint, meanwhile, didn't seem to mind in the least, as he immediately hopped off his father's head and headed towards Dale's familial home while ringing the bell. That was just the sort of aloof pup that he was.

"You must be tired, right, Latina? Are you alright?"

"No, I'm fine."

"I see."

After comforting his bride as such, Dale scooped her up in his arms once again.

"Keep your mouth shut nice and tight so you don't bite your tongue."

"Hmm?"

Latina tilted her head, unable to understand what Dale had meant. Before she had time to figure it out, though, Dale stood atop the saddle on Hagel's back.

"Well then, you have my thanks once again."

"Indeed," Hagel briefly replied, as they had known each other for a good while now.

And with that, Dale kicked off into the air with Latina in his arms, not showing even the tiniest bit of hesitation.

"...?!"

Latina had been earnestly listening to Dale's words, so she didn't manage to properly make a sound, but even so her voiceless scream trailed off into the evening glow of the sky.

The long sleeves of the wedding dress and the delicate veil fluttered violently in the wind.

Hagel regretted a bit that he had taken the promise so seriously and chosen not to enter the village.

When they journeyed about exterminating demon lords Dale had learned

how to launch an assault by throwing himself from Hagel's back while in mid-air, but such things came as a complete surprise to a girl like Latina.

It was like a sudden bungee jump without a cord.

Latina was known to be rather bold by nature, but faced with this unexpectedly terrifying experience, her soul nearly escaped from her body.

Naturally, when Randolph and Granny Wen met Dale, who had gone and done something so unexpected and was now holding his dazed bride in his arms, they couldn't help but skip over any greetings to instead whack him one upside the head.

It was then that Dale realized just what he had done, so he just obediently stood there and took it.

It could be said that the one big effect of the whole thing was that Latina was now too stunned to be nervous about meeting Dale's family for the first time in a while and being welcomed as his bride.

"Wah... S-S-Sorry... I-It's... I-It's been a..." Latina started, trying to greet everyone despite being so unsteady that her very sense of equilibrium was in question, and her eyes were spinning.

"Ah, don't force yourself. You went and got dressed up as such a beautiful bride, and then my son had to go and be such an idiot..." Dale's mother Magda interjected.

Latina was an incredibly serious person by nature.

Even so, she somehow managed to get her thoughts back in order, and then changed into her Tislow wedding attire. That traditional attire had an entirely different feel to it than the flashy wedding dress she had been wearing, and when Latina slid her arms through the sleeves, deep emotions welled up inside of her.

She removed the veil from her head and put on an orange hat.

Around then, Dale also finished changing into his outfit. He was quite accustomed to such attire from his clan, but it felt incredibly fresh seeing it on Latina, prompting a bashful smile from him.

There wasn't so much as a speck of dirt on the shoes Latina had worn from Kreuz. The cloth shoes were pure white while the outfit from Tislow was black, but they didn't feel out of place to her in the least. Apparently she had put a good deal of thought into how the design would work once she changed outfits, too.

Latina took Dale's outstretched hand with a wide smile on her face.

From here, she was to be unveiled to the clan, and then they would have a banquet.

While Latina was getting ready, Dale picked up the flowers from the people back in Kreuz outside of the village. After all, those needed to be offered before the god, too.

Their wedding ceremony would continue on for a while yet.

In Tislow weddings, before the banquet, flowers were offered to the shrine dedicated to Quirmizi.

Normally only the bride and groom would head to the shrine, but Dale and Latina had received far more flowers than was typical. There were just far too many for them to carry, so Dale's younger brother Yorck was tasked with assisting them.

The candlestick for the bride to hold was decorated with elaborate craftsmanship. It was created as a ritualistic tool for ceremonies, and the flickering light of a candle leaked out between the engraved designs all over it.

The groom, meanwhile, carried a tray with the flowers from the Tislow clan riding on top.

Together, the pair walked side by side to the waterfalls that served as a shrine, not speaking a word. Thanks to the solemn air of the ceremony, they felt unable to talk even if they wanted to.

The bride's candlestick alone would be a bit unreliable for walking the mountain path as twilight was spreading, but fortunately there were magical devices placed at intervals to provide light, so there was no need for concern. With that said, though, the footing was poor, so they still had to proceed slowly.

And yet, slowly, calmly taking their time didn't feel all that bad.

Occasionally, the two shared a glance. And that alone seemed to be enough for them to each understand what the other was feeling.

Their destination for the ceremony was a small shrine dedicated to Quirmizi in a semi-circular area with waterfalls. The thin waterfalls flowing forth from the surrounding bedrock flowed into a basin, making a refreshing sound. And the splashing of the water created a fine mist, making the area feel rather cool. That also certainly wasn't unrelated to the overall sacred feeling about the space.

Lanterns had been set up there in advance, and the bride transferred the flame from her candle into them. She bent over carefully by each of them, and before long the light was reflecting off the water in the basin, surrounding the area with whimsical flickering flames.

Once all the lanterns were lit, the groom placed the tray he had carried in front of the shrine. And for this particular ceremony, a large basket was also placed beside it.

And then, the bride and groom stood side by side and offered a prayer. In this place, they didn't need ritualistic words or a priest's blessing. No, all they needed was a pure, simple prayer.

The clan carried deep favor from the god and lived with faith as part of their everyday lives, so they valued prayers of pure gratitude and belief.

Once their prayer was finished, the new couple looked into one another's eyes. In perfect sync, they both broke out in smiles, then held each other's hands, stood up, and looked around their surroundings.

"It's beautiful..."

"Yeah."

"And... I'm really happy, being able to see this sight again like this."

When his young bride said that, Dale turned and smiled at her. He couldn't help but find it strange to be standing here again with her like this, with her having grown so truly beautiful.

“I’ll strive my hardest... So that you can keep on saying that you’re happy.”

“I will too.”

The two snuggled close together, thinking of the future. They happily smiled at one another, realizing that today wasn’t the final destination, but rather only the beginning.

His elder brother and his bride were completely in their own world now, and though it would feel boorish to interject, Yorick felt incredibly awkward as they seemed to have completely forgotten he was there.

They may have been just wed, but still, the extreme sugaryness of their sweet talk was enough to give him heartburn just from watching.

And because he was dealing with his brother, he found it hard to say anything. He figured he could head back ahead of them since he had finished carrying their luggage, but he still felt a bit bad about it.

Latina smiled throughout the whole banquet with the clan, too.

Normally she would have liked to been part of the group that made the food for the guests, too, but she just didn’t have time for that. And so instead, she decided to focus purely on enjoying tasting the food.

Latina sat beside Dale in front of the large crowd of guests, and as she received her portion of the meal and ate it bit by bit, she smiled even brighter with each bite.

Dale occasionally glanced over at his smiling bride and broke out in a grin himself. Of course in his case, he gave a pathetically sloppy smile, but still, he definitely looked happy.

“Looks like you’ve already completely lost your backbone, huh?” his childhood friends and relatives teased, pointing out that deplorable expression on his face, but Dale showed no sign of feeling any shame.

“What’s so odd about that when I’m faced with such a beautiful bride?” he quipped back without a hint of hesitation.

The one one who had brought it up in the first place ultimately ended up seeming at a loss as to how to respond.

“Dale...” Latina chimed in as well, her face red. As she had a more conventional sense of shame, having him go on and on about her like that in front of so many people was naturally embarrassing.

Each time a guest came up to congratulate them Dale’s beer glass was filled up, but he kept on draining it at a consistent pace. He was good at holding his liquor to begin with, so it was hard to judge whether or not this was the result of his capabilities having been strengthened by becoming a demon.

Still, Latina liked to believe he was at least a little drunk. After all, she didn’t want to believe he was completely sober when he was saying these things to one guest after another.

“Latina’s always adorable, but her beauty’s on a whole other level today, so there’s no helping it.”

“Dale... I appreciate that, but you shouldn’t say such things in front of so many people...”

“Then it’s fine if we’re all alone?” Dale asked, sounding as if he had given up any and all self restraint.

“Even if it’s just the two of us, it’s still embarrassing...”

“My parents both have been saying how they’d like to see their grandkids, so there’s no need to worry.”

“You really are drunk, aren’t you, Dale?”

It wasn’t rare at all for him to rub his cheek up against hers like that, and he was usually that close and clingy with her, but the way he wasn’t paying any attention to who was watching and the alcohol on his breath lead Latina to that conclusion.

Maybe the fact that only his relatives were around was a problem, too. After all, it was a real shame having nobody like the couple who ran the Ocelot around to quip back at him.

As Latina went red from embarrassment, Dale leered at her slightly with upturned eyes. From today on she was his wife, so she should be firm with him here in this instance.

Contrary to Latina's determination, though, the members of the Tislow clan welcoming the bride as one of them with this banquet saw her as something akin to an adorable little animal being doted on by her groom.

It would seem the path till she became the sort of dauntless adult woman she wanted to be was still quite long indeed.

And the greatest obstacle of all for that was Dale, who had finally gotten her to sit on his lap as he hugged her. It was no surprise that everyone around was shooting them such lukewarm gazes. Yes, no surprise at all...

5: Sequel: The Platinum Maiden, the Pup, and the Fluffiness

And so, the wedding ended in Tislow, and the time had come for Dale and Latina to decide on what they would do next.

“We borrowed Hagel’s aid on the way here, but do you want to take a relaxed walk back?”

“Yeah.”

The plan was to use their return to Kreuz as an opportunity to take a short trip.

Thanks to not just his work but also his world-spanning journey to eliminate the demon lords, travel was nothing novel for Dale. However, Latina had very few opportunities to leave town in general. Recently she did get to visit the capital and the surrounding towns, so she had technically been out and about, but that was ultimately just thanks to her position as princess, and so she didn’t really get to enjoy it.

Dale couldn’t say for certain just how things would go from here on out.

Surely, Latina wished to keep on working as a waitress at the Ocelot, enjoying the comforting bustle of everyday life. And Dale certainly wanted to grant her that wish. However, there was also no changing the fact that Latina was the princess of the neighboring country of Vassilios. And with this latest trip to the capital, the Labandese lords learned of her existence.

Surely someday, it would be asked of her to take up a fitting position. And when that time came, Dale and Latina’s lives would clearly change.

With that said, though, that wouldn’t happen in a day or two. And so, Dale figured it was fine to take advantage of this brief reprieve for a nice relaxed trip.

When they had traveled together before, Dale had prepared a horse for carrying their luggage, but this time he just carried it all in a large knapsack.

Right now that much weight wouldn't cause Dale any trouble, and as long as that faithful pup Vint was around, he could deal with any sudden instances of combat. And now that Latina was grown, she could use all sorts of magic for both offense and defense.

Thanks to all that, even if the luggage hindered Dale, they should still have all sorts of options for handling matters.

Dale was wearing much the same thing as always, but Latina's preparations had primarily been taken care of by Granny Wendelgard, so she looked rather different from usual.

The ribbon with soaring wolf fur woven into it was a present she had received in the past, but this time around it was attached to a hat. The big bow was designed to flow down the back of her head, which was adorable but not overly childish. She also had on a tunic tailored in traditional Tislow designs, long pants and boots, making it clear that she was prepared to trek through the mountains. And the pale-hued overcoat she had on was meant more for warding off the sun than the cold. All in all, it was a well coordinated outfit that worked to accentuate her natural cuteness.

Dale couldn't help but smile with a degree of frustration at the product of his grandmother's fashion sense. But when Latina turned around with a joyous expression on her face and her long hair swaying, the tone of Dale's smile became more natural and gentle.

"It's a bit sad that we couldn't take our time in Tislow... But if we did, then we wouldn't be able to in the other towns, which'd be sad, too... It's kind of a tricky dilemma, isn't it?"

"With Hagel's help, we can get back to my home village pretty quickly. And I think it'd be fine to just pop in now and again in the future... After all, there's family there for you now, too."

"...Yeah."

The summer sun shone down on thick, verdant trees, casting tessellated shadows across the forest floor. Dale slowly walked along the path as a refreshing breeze blew on by, and Latina looked at him with a slightly embarrassed looking smile.

On this trip, there was one place that Latina absolutely wanted to visit, no matter what.

“With that said, a number of years have passed since then, so she might have forgotten me...” Latina muttered as they walked the thin forest path. Vint was walking a bit ahead of them, and something seemed to have caught his attention, as he was sniffing at his surroundings.

“That’s true... It’s especially difficult to remember back to when you were an infant...” Dale agreed. It was rare for Dale to say something like that to Latina when he normally doted heavily on the girl, but he decided it was better to say something that would let her down a bit now rather than foolishly getting her hopes up only for her to be seriously disappointed later. In other words, he was still staying true to his usual doting nature.

Before long, the forest opened up.

A small village came into view, made up of little houses with stone walls and roofs the color of trees all huddled close together.

This was where Latina wanted to go, and what had been weighing on her mind: Her second visit to this beastman village.

“I’m sure... that Maya’s gotten bigger, right?”

“It’s been years since then, after all. I suppose she’s probably about the same age that you were back then.”

Dale couldn’t help but give a strained smile at Latina’s statement as he walked into the village. After all, Latina had no room to talk about someone having “gotten bigger,” considering how much she had grown herself since then.

While those thoughts ran through his head, Dale made sure to keep an eye on the pup sniffing all around more than usual, so that he wouldn’t do anything he shouldn’t. Vint was just so on edge and unpredictable right now that Dale sort of wished he could just put a leash on him.

Soon enough, they stood before a familiar small house.

Latina had a bit of a troubled look on her face, so Dale knocked on the door in her place. And when they got a response and the door opened...

Dale froze, completely taken aback.

The fuzzballs... had multiplied.

Joseph was a relative of Dale's, though a distant one, which meant those kids were related to him, too. That made it pretty awful for him to say it, but as a human, Dale had a hard time telling even the sex of pure beastmen just from looking at them.

There were three beastman children running excitedly around the room. On top of that, all three of them were black-furred. There were some slight differences in size, but it was hard to even tell the differences in their ages.

"Oh, so Maya has two little brothers now, huh? Their faces sure are a lot alike. Is one a bit older than Emma, and the other about her age?"

Dale thought it had to be some sort of special skill that Latina possessed for her to be able to determine all that so quickly. You really couldn't go underestimating the devil race.

And as Dale stood there looking troubled at having suddenly gained more relatives, the situation only grew more chaotic.

"Pshah!"

"Woof!"

"Krrrrr!"

"Ngyaaa!"

Vint and the kids had started trying to intimidate each other.

All of their fur was standing on edge, but that just made the fuzzballs look even fluffier. The oldest, Maya and Vint, were in an intense showdown where neither side would back down, but the younger two looked a bit like they were ready to flee. They just stood behind their big sister, trying the best that they could manage to look intimidating.

Well, I occasionally forget it, but he is a mythical beast. Guess this reaction makes sense...

Dale just watched over the situation unfolding with a distant look in his eyes,

but Latina reacted a bit differently than usual.

“Bad Vint!” she scolded, kneeling down and looking him right in the eyes.
“You shouldn’t go scaring little kids like that.”

“Mrrr...”



Vint looked clearly displeased at being scolded, but he just sat there and took it rather than trying to argue. But then, he started rubbing his head up against Latina. Then, he glanced back at the black furballs with a self-satisfied look, lording it over them. Even if Dale couldn't understand canine facial expressions, it was abundantly apparent that he was asserting his own dominance.

"Pshah!"

"Yeah, that'll get you angry, alright," Dale quipped, unable to hold himself back after seeing Vint's attitude.

It was then that a large man sluggishly appeared from behind all that commotion.

"Is that you, Dale? Long time no see."

"Yeah, yeah. I'm just glad to find you doing well, Joseph. We were over this way for the first time in a while, so we stopped in to see you."

Joseph, the head of the house, was actually more stout than just large, and he also looked older than Dale remembered. Only his thin eyes and the gentle impression they provided remained unchanged.

As he ushered Dale's group into the house, he continued on, "It sure has been a while... Are you on your way to the village?"

"No, we're actually on our way back..."

Dale's eyes wandered a bit as he wondered how he should explain. When the conversation came to a halt as a result, though, Latina took a step forward and smiled.

"I'm glad to see you're doing well, Mr. Joseph. We were staying in Tislow until a few days ago... And now, we're on our way back to Kreuz."

"Huh...? Ah, you're that little lady from back then, aren't you? You sure have grown."

From the cheerful way Joseph was chatting away, it seemed that the story of the Fairy Princess and the Platinum Hero hadn't made it all the way out here to this rural village in the mountains. Somehow, that made Dale feel relieved. He just couldn't stand the thought of being treated like the protagonist of an epic

by his relative, after all.

Dale then realized how utterly out of the loop Joseph had been, and hesitated as to whether he should inform him of his marriage to Latina. And that was only made worse by the fact that the man had known her when she was a child.

“Maya’s grown a lot, too.”

Latina looked over at the biggest black fuzzball as she said that, only for the puffball of a girl to look back at Latina and then turn away.

Maya’s reaction caused Latina to furrow her brows a bit in disappointment.

“Hey, you all say hello, too.”

“Yup, hewwo.”

“Hello.”

Urged on by their father, the two young boys offered an earnest greeting. They were fittingly adorable for their young age, causing Latina to break out in a smile as she kneeled down and looked at them face to face.

“Hello. Sorry for intruding.”

Dale could see the tension fade from the two toddlers just from Latina smiling at them. Apparently Dale wasn’t the only one to notice, though, as Vint started rubbing his body up against Latina’s again.

“How shameless...”

He was clearly trying to direct his owner’s attention his way in a painfully obvious display.

“Well, it’s fine and all that you stopped by so suddenly, but still... I never imagined you would go and bring a mythical beast along with you...” Joseph said with a look of astonishment, staring at his young children facing off with Vint.

Vint lived in the Ocelot, so he recognized Theo and Emma as “family” that were part of his territory. And so, even if Latina was acting all kind to the siblings, Vint wouldn’t interfere or attack them.

But apparently, Vint understood that he was in a weaker “away” position here

at this beastman village. And he was also aware of the fact that Latina had a soft spot for young children.

“Grrrr...”

Rub, rub. Rub, rub.

Vint repeatedly rubbed his head up against Latina.

That was precisely why Vint felt the need to appeal himself to Latina so excessively.

“What’s the matter, Vint?” Latina asked in her usual aloof manner, proving that Vint’s desperate attempts at garnering attention had unfortunately failed to get across.

While all that was going on, the smallest of the fuzzballs sat atop Latina’s lap. It was an act that could be interpreted as sneakily getting a head start, causing a tension to run between Vint and the toddler.

Latina, meanwhile, just happily smiled at the child, noticing nothing of the heightened tension all around her.

Dale, however, turned his gaze away from the powderkeg of a situation, towards the master of the house.

“Ah, right, Joseph. This is from the main house...”

“Hmm? Ooh, I appreciate it.”

Dale pulled a souvenir from back home out of his knapsack and offered it to Joseph, intentionally drawing the man’s attention his way. It was a perfectly reasonable choice, though.

Dale’s expectations hit the mark, as soon afterwards, the fuzzballs all mobbed Latina. In the past, just Maya alone doing that had been enough to knock Latina over. And she may have been an adult this time around, but she was up against greater numbers, including a certain mythical beast pup.

She didn’t have a chance, facing two wild toddlers from the exceptional Tislow lineage as well as the son of the leader of the soaring wolves.

“Huh? Wha...? H-Hold on a...!”

Faced with this sudden onslaught of the fluffy brigade demanding to be pet, Latina at first tried to say something meaningful and get them under control. However, her words soon lost all meaning whatsoever.

“Uwaaaah!” Latina shrieked like a kitten from within the bundle of fuzzballs, and then she was knocked over. It really went exactly like Dale had predicted.

He would feel a bit immature trying to seriously restrain the toddlers and pup, and besides, Latina somehow sounded happy rather than upset as she fell. And so, Dale had no choice left to him but just watch and wait.

“Are you alright?”

“Not real— Wah....! Waaaah!”

Despite the fact that she couldn’t do a thing about these toddlers and this pup, simply raising a pathetic shriek, she was still a demon lord, making her a sort of lower ranking god.

“Sometimes, truth is stranger than fiction...” Dale muttered, watching over Latina as she now tumbled over in the opposite direction. He really was at peak deplorability, thinking that she still looked adorable even while being helplessly bowled over.

Ultimately, Latina was saved from the assault by the fuzzy mob by someone who had been watching over the commotion just like Dale.

Maya had been quietly staring as her younger brothers and the pup all swarmed Latina, but now she silently, quickly plunged into the center of the storm.

Then, she struck a daunting pose and glared at her surroundings.

It was only then that Dale finally noticed that Maya was wearing a girlish dress. And yet, she gave off a far greater aura than you would expect of someone her age, to such a degree that the impression from her made it hard to tell if she was a boy or a girl even so.

Did she get that from his grandmother? If so, he got the feeling it’d probably be best to correct that now, while they had the chance...

As those thoughts ran through his head, Dale broke out in a cold sweat.

“Pyah!”

“Pii!”

The two younger brothers wrapped their tails together and stood up straight. That reaction really made it clear the sort of relationship they had with their sister.

Having reined in her brothers as such, Maya then plopped down with a heave-ho.

Naturally, that meant atop Latina’s lap.

Unable to hide her surprise at this overly sudden action, Latina called out, “Um, Maya...?”

“...Turn,” Maya muttered her own sound effect, facing away from Latina as the girl tried to look at her closer. Latina wasn’t discouraged, though, and tried to look from the other side, only for Maya to face away once again.

“Turn!” she said out loud again.

That childish action caused Latina to break out in a wide smile. Her adorable little standoffish act was apparently really tugging at Latina’s heartstrings.

“Maya.”

“Turn!”

“Maya.”

“Turn!”

As Latina happily repeated that over and over, Vint went, “Grr...” with a look of clear dissatisfaction on his face. It was showing so clearly that even Dale picked up on it, even though he normally couldn’t read animal expressions in the least.

And as Maya kept on turning her head, whenever her gaze met with Vint’s, she shot him a supremely self-satisfied look, lording her victory over him.

As Vint growled away, the expression on his face just grew more and more frustrated.

It would seem that this first contest for Latina’s attention had a clear winner.

However, it was hard to imagine this first contest would be the last. And it didn't seem like with the feel in the air, they could hurry up and get back on the road.

Well, we're in no hurry, so I guess it's fine, Dale thought to himself, deciding to ask Joseph about staying for the night. *I don't know if I should feel uneasy or outright scared at the fact that it looks like she'll have not just a soaring wolf devotee, but beastmen, too...*

"Sturdy black furred beastman warriors served by the Fairy Princess's side, protecting her." In the future, that would become part of her epic. Or at least, how incredibly easy that was to imagine caused Dale to shudder. It was frightening how reasonable that seemed when looking at the puffballs' absolute adoration of the girl.

As a demon lord, Dale was Latina's one and only retainer, but he couldn't help but feel that she already had more overwhelming combat strength to her name than any warlike demon lord ever would.

After that thought ran through his head, Dale gave a single sigh.

"Maya."

"Turn!"

It would be nice if when they said farewell this time, it could be with smiles and a promise to meet again. Or at least, that's what Dale thought as he quietly watched over them and smiled.

Ending: In a World Watched Over by a Rainbow

Laband was a rich country of humans with a long history to it. The primary god worshiped there was Ahmar, and they paid their laws great respect. That could be seen in the way that they didn't stand for discrimination against other races or exploitation based on rank, and it had been governed fairly for a long, long time.

And it was a nation that had for a long time carried friendly relations with its neighboring nation of Vassilios, the country of devils.

Vassilios's Golden King was known for her beauty and wisdom, and she actively invited students from Laband to her country, as well as formed close relationships between the two nations in terms of cultural and both academic and magical studies.

Alongside the highway connecting the two countries, there stood a small town.

It was built right near a magical beast habitat, so there was certainly some concern there in terms of safety, but it was also a place admired by adventurers the world over. After all, it was a town that had been built *by* adventurers.

And in the inn that had been there since shortly after the town's founding, the Singing White Cat, you could hear quite a few anecdotes related to a legendary hero who had once been famous the world over.

The one who governed this land wasn't just a ruler, but also a first rate warrior, as well as quite open-minded towards adventurers. And the harmonious couple who ruled may have retired at present, but their adopted children, in addition to being their disciples, had taken over managing the town, and so that policy hadn't changed in the least.

Yes, it was a land admired by adventurers. And it was called that for many reasons.

The highway cut right through the middle of magical beast territory, which

meant that traveling it unavoidably meant facing danger. As such, the majority of travelers hired adventurers to guard them as they passed through.

The wise Golden King took great pains to always carefully maintain this highway between the nations, and constructed towers at regular intervals for that purpose. For travelers, those towers both served as landmarks for travelers, as well as safe places to rest, as they had barriers cast upon them to repel magical beasts.

The white walled tower that indicated you were nearing Laband was especially magnificent.

Most folks believed that the sun and moon symbols carved into the sides of the tower represented the Golden King and her sister, and were a joint effort to commemorate establishing friendly relations between the two nations.

A noteworthy fact about the tower was that occasionally travelers would bring bouquets as offerings, which gradually led to more and more varieties of flower seeds taking root there, until the place was a beautiful flower field regardless of what season it may be.

The tower kept on watching over the travelers as a great many of them visited to take in the lovely sight.

Beyond that portion of the highway lay the town of Kreuz, which was called the second capital of Laband.

It was surrounded by walls, and just as its name implied it was laid out in the shape of a cross, albeit it a slightly distorted one. And as it was the point of contact for trade with Vassilios, a great many travelers and merchants gathered there.

A great deal of adventurers also came and went there, taking on jobs to guard travelers along the highway or exterminate magical beasts. The town's welcoming atmosphere towards outsiders had been cultivated over many years, and remained strong to this day.

You could sense how blessed and tranquil the town was from the number of children that could be seen gallivanting around.

A woman in traveling attire watched those children playing, naturally

breaking out in a gentle smile.

One of the playing children then tumbled right in front of her.

“Ah! Are you alright?” she reflexively called out, as she saw the child’s knee bleeding. It seemed he had been unfortunate, and a sharp stone ended up cutting it. When the child looked down at his knee, his face started to distort and tears began welling up in his eyes.

“Looks like you cut it... Could you be brave for just a moment?” the woman asked, bending down so she was looking the child in the face.

Hearing her incredibly gentle voice, the child looked back at her. Then, he looked utterly flabbergasted, as if he had even forgotten that he was about to cry.

“The Fairy Princess...”

It was a folk tale that every child in this town knew, as well as an epic that a great many people the world over were familiar with: the legend known as “The Platinum Hero and the Fairy Princess.”

The child had read it countless times in the form of a picture book. This woman was beautiful, just like the princess from that book.

The woman gave an awkward smile at the child’s comment, and then pointed the tip of her finger towards his knee. There was a pale light, and then the throbbing pain suddenly disappeared.

“Are you alright?” the woman asked again in a gentle voice.

“Yeah,” the child replied with a big nod.

With that motion, a small black fragment dangling from the child’s neck came into view and sparkled.

“That’s...”

Noticing that it had caught the woman’s attention, the child held it up proudly for her to see.

“It’s a charm!”

“...I see. A charm...”

“Yeah. My dad gave it to me. And dad got it from grandma, and she had been given it too. It keeps on getting passed down the line.”

“Right... You’re taking good care of it, aren’t you?”

“Yeah!”

The child didn’t know why her grey eyes had teared up just a bit, but he was happy to see that she had smiled.

The woman reached out once again, touching the black shard.

“Yes... This is a charm.”

Feeling the shard seem to give off just a bit of warmth, the child tilted his head. The woman smiled further, finding the childish reaction quite charming.

“There’s a wish imbued in it, that the precious person receiving it will find happiness,” she whispered in an incredibly gentle voice.

The child didn’t quite understand what she meant, but he felt all warm and fuzzy inside.

“Mom!”

“Mama!”

Hearing those two youthful voices, the woman looked up.

What she saw there was a young man in a black coat, as well as a little boy and girl. The children were holding the man’s hands and waving her way with their free hands.

“You got lost!”

“Dad panicked a whole lot again.”

The woman stood up, giving an awkward smile at what the children had said.

“...Ah,” she uttered, seemingly realizing something.

The children looked up in turn, and saw a large rainbow cast across the sky.

“Rainbows appear in the sky when the gods are looking down over the land.”

After saying that with a smile, she took off jogging towards the children who were beckoning her.

The family looked truly happy, gathering underneath the rainbow.



Afterword

“By the way, do you know what’s going to happen next?” my editor asked me back when I was back in the initial stages of writing the series, and back then, I honestly hadn’t predicted how things would turn out at all.

For most of you, this is probably our first time meeting. I’m CHIROLU, and I’d like to sincerely thank you for picking up this work, the eighth volume of *If It’s for My Daughter, I’d Even Defeat a Demon Lord*.

Before I started writing and was in the process of laying out how things would go, the image of the epilogue to the story came to mind. I’m well aware that it’s thanks to all of you who have stuck with me thus far that a hack like me was able to make it all the way to somehow writing this epilogue I came up with while fumbling about. You truly have my deepest gratitude.

...I intended to start thanking everyone there, but in a truly wonderful bit of news, the titular daughter will continue to grow, as I can inform you all that this work is being adapted into an anime.

Back when I was having that conversation from before with my editor, I really never imagined the titular daughter would end up expanding into so many different mediums. It seems she wasn’t just cute, she was also a harder, more capable worker than even I, the author, had thought... I realize while writing that comment that I come across like a certain former guardian of hers, so I’m making a bit of an awkward expression at the moment.

Thank you so much to everyone who helped make this book a reality. And to Kei, who drew the lovely titular daughter in a beautiful wedding dress for the finale, never uttering a complaint. And more than anything else, to those of you who chose this book out of so many options, you have my deepest gratitude.

As long as this book brought you at least a little joy, then I’ll feel truly blessed.

Once again, thank you so much for everythi—

“How about putting out a short story collection alongside the anime?”

“Huh? I already declared it was ending, and even wrote a clear epilogue, didn’t I?”

“You can just write something fresh.”

“...This is what it’s like to be an adult, huh?!”

“That’s right.”

Or so my editor told me, so if anything ends up coming out, that’ll be down to my responsibilities as an adult.

February 2019,

CHIROLU

Bonus Short Stories

The Young Man's Dissatisfaction with the Platinum-haired Maiden

Dale was feeling a bit troubled.

He had loudly proclaimed his adoration of Latina to the world without a hint of hesitation, but right now, she was in the midst of official duties as the sister of Vassilios's king. And that may have been easy enough to say, but she had been raised in the rough part of town ever since being exiled from her home country, so it was more than a little surprising how well she took to the role of princess.

Latina was beautiful to begin with, but when lined up with her identical twin sister, they truly captured the attention of high society. Being viewed both positively by the population, and as a subject of interest by the nobility, she was quite helpful in negotiations between Laband and Vassilios.

That all was good.

Well, he did want to monopolize his adorable Latina, so he couldn't quite say that mob getting interested in her was "good," but there was no helping it since it was related to his work.

The beautiful outfit Latina wore had been prepared by Vassilios, and carried all the beauty of that nation's aesthetics. And perhaps owing to sharing her country of origin, it suited Latina very well.

It was none of that, however, which was on Dale's mind.

"...Why do almost all the prepared outfits have you matching with Chrysos?"

"Huh?"

"Is there truly a need to ask such a question at this point?"

It was no surprise that Dale's question left the twins both looking astounded.

“It is to unveil her as my sister,” Chrysos responded, like it was only natural.

Latina, meanwhile, looked troubled.

“Dale... Do you want to match with me? But if you matched me, that would mean you’d match Chrysos too...”

“That’s not it, Latina...”

Unsurprisingly, her response had been a bit off the mark.

“Chrysos and I have lots of dresses in such pretty colors, but you mostly just wear black, Dale...”

“Flashy colors simply do not match your personality.”

Dale was fully aware of that, as well, so he was at a loss as to how to respond.

This is a digression, but during the following party at the palace, Latina wore a Labandese style dress, while Dale stood by her side wearing cuffs and a pocket handkerchief in matching colors. And when Chrysos realized that, her work face gave way to a different expression entirely.

The Platinum-haired Maiden and the Golden-eyed King

Discuss the Past and Future

When Latina came to the capital city Ausblick alongside the envoys from Vassilios, she visited the second prince’s manor, which fell under the control of Gregor’s older sister Fania. The banquet the envoy group was invited to was just a small family affair, but it was held in a flower garden with beautifully blooming flowers, which made for quite a lovely sight. Of course, the “family” being invited should have been perfectly obvious. Yes, it was those related to the second prince’s faction, making this a political maneuver to win support from the neighboring country with which their nation would soon enter into friendly relations.

Putting aside the ruler of that neighboring country, Chrysos, who carried all the slyness of an entire den of foxes, Latina appeared so exhausted that you would think she had spent the whole day frolicking around with kittens. And so, even though she was one of the guests of honor, Latina decided to step away

from her seat for a bit.

Well, to be more accurate, she didn't step away from the banquet. No, she instead moved out of view of everyone else and into the shade, where she could catch her breath.

"What's the matter, Platina?"

"Chrysos."

It was Latina's twin sister who was the first to notice.

Thinking inside that she was causing her sister nothing but trouble, she decided to voice a different reason.

"These flowers... I was just thinking that I recalled seeing some like them back in Vassilios," Latina said, pointing to a pure white flower that was blooming wide in multiple layers. As she turned and looked at it, Chrysos broke out in a gentle smile.

"That may be so."

"Hey, Chrysos... There's the climate to consider, so I'd love to see Vassilios full of flowers, but..." Latina said, smiling as well. She couldn't help but feel relieved that Chrysos was sharing the same memory as her. It was a truly happy memory, of when they presented their parents with pure white flowers.

"I'd like Rag and Mov to be buried together someday... And to present them with a whole lot of flowers."

It was a shared wish of the twins to one day place their mother to rest in the place where their father was currently eternally slumbering on his own. Right now it was a barren place, but if their dream that a highway between their two nations pass alongside there were to come true, the scenery would surely change.

"What flowers did Rag and Mov like, I wonder...? Would we be able to find out by asking people who used to know them?"

It was a purely innocent question from Latina, but Chrysos's tone shifted as she answered.

"If I one day change the nation enough to welcome you openly, Platina..."

Chrysos started in a serious tone, causing Latina to tilt her head. *“If that time comes, I will have to gather people who knew Rag and Mov, and give you a chance to discuss the past with them.”*

Latina quickly realized that her sister said that out of consideration for the fact that she had been exiled and had grown up in a foreign nation where nobody knew their parents. And so, she answered with a smile on her face.

“Yeah. If I come back someday... I’ll definitely look forward to it.”

“Latina?” a man’s voice suddenly interrupted, shifting the mood. It was Dale, who had been watching them with a serious look on his face, but now looked taken aback.

“What are you up to over here? Playing hooky?”

“I wish you would at least call it ‘taking a rest.’”

“How truly lacking in delicacy you are.”

“You two really act in tandem at times like this...” Dale grumbled without even thinking, causing Chrysos to grin in response. That put an end to things, and the sisters turned back on their public faces.

However, they ever so briefly linked hands, as proof of the secret promise they had made.



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If It's for My Daughter, I'd Even Defeat a Demon Lord: Volume 8

by CHIROLU

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Edited by Christopher Foxx

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